

UNIT 1 Describing People



1 Read the following table, then listen to the cassette and tick the information mentioned. Finally, use the table and the photograph to describe Paul.

Height	quite tall <input type="checkbox"/>	rather short <input type="checkbox"/>		
Build	well-built <input type="checkbox"/>	thin <input type="checkbox"/>	muscular <input type="checkbox"/>	
Age	early twenties <input type="checkbox"/>	mid thirties <input type="checkbox"/>	teenaged <input type="checkbox"/>	
Facial Features	oval face <input type="checkbox"/>	high cheekbones <input type="checkbox"/>	blue eyes <input type="checkbox"/>	mole <input type="checkbox"/>
Hair	curly <input type="checkbox"/>	short brown <input type="checkbox"/>	wavy <input type="checkbox"/>	
Clothes	casual <input type="checkbox"/>	formal <input type="checkbox"/>		
Personality	good-humoured <input type="checkbox"/>	imaginative <input type="checkbox"/>	vain <input type="checkbox"/>	short-tempered <input type="checkbox"/>
Activities/Hobbies	going to discos <input type="checkbox"/>	watching old films <input type="checkbox"/>	cooking <input type="checkbox"/>	

A descriptive composition about a person should consist of:

- an **introduction** where you give some brief information about the person (his/her name, time or place you met/saw him/her, how you heard about him/her);
- a **main body** where you describe physical appearance, personality characteristics and hobbies/interests/everyday activities in separate paragraphs; and
- a **conclusion** which includes your comments and/or feelings about the person.

Such descriptions can be found in articles, letters, witness statements, novels, etc.

Points to consider

- Each paragraph starts with a topic sentence which introduces the subject of the paragraph. A variety of linking words should be used to connect ideas.
- To describe physical appearance, details should be given as follows: **height/build, age, facial features, hair, clothes**, moving from the most general aspects to the more specific details. *e.g. John is a tall, slim man in his mid forties. He has a thin face, blue eyes and a large nose. His short hair is greying at the temples. He is usually casually dressed.*
- To describe character and behaviour you can support your description with examples. *e.g. Sally is very sociable. She loves going to parties and dances.* If you want to mention any negative qualities, use mild language (tends to, seems to, is rather, can occasionally be, etc.). *e.g. Instead of saying Sally is arrogant, it is better to say Sally tends to be rather arrogant.*
- Variety in the use of adjectives will make your description more interesting. *e.g. good-natured, well-behaved, gorgeous, etc.*
- Present tenses can be used to describe someone connected to the present, *e.g. someone you see every day.* Past tenses can be used to describe someone related to the past, *e.g. someone who is no longer alive, someone whom you won't meet again ... etc.*

Introduction

Paragraph 1

name of the person; time you met/saw him/her

Main Body

Paragraph 2

physical appearance

Paragraph 3

personality characteristics and justification

Paragraph 4

hobbies, interests or any activities he/she takes part in

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

comments & feelings about the person

- 2** Read the model composition and write down the topic of each paragraph. Find the topic sentences for each paragraph and try to replace them with other similar ones. Then underline the adjectives which describe physical appearance and circle the ones which describe personality.

Mavis,
neighbour for six
years

“My Next-door Neighbour”

Mavis has been my neighbour for six years. I first met her when she knocked on my door and asked for a spade because she hadn't yet unpacked hers. She had only moved in two days before.

Physically, Mavis looks younger than most other women in their late sixties. She is of average height, neither fat nor thin. Her plump round face is framed by a mass of wavy white hair and her sparkling blue eyes show her humour and friendliness. She prefers wearing casual, comfortable clothes. I don't think I have ever seen her in a perfectly ironed suit.

As for her personality, Mavis's most striking characteristic is her generosity. My house, as well as most of our neighbours', nearly always has a vase of flowers from her garden in the living room. Mavis is very good-natured and always has time for a chat. She is also patient. She hardly ever gets annoyed about anything, except when children pick her favourite roses and lilies. However, she tends to be quite stubborn – once she has made a decision, nothing can change her mind.

Mavis always seems to be busy doing something. She spends a lot of her time looking after her garden and often participates in local flower shows. When she is not in her garden she is usually off somewhere raising money for one charity or another.

All in all, Mavis is the perfect next-door neighbour. Since the day she moved in, we have grown very close and I am very fond of her, even if I am woken up by the noise of her lawnmower early in the morning!



- 3** Fill in the table with words from the list below. Using words from the completed table describe your partner's physical appearance, then write a short paragraph describing the appearance of a relative of yours.

round, oval, slanted, ginger, of medium height, middle-aged, mole, teenaged, curly, blond, tall, wrinkled, thick, balding, just over six foot, tanned, slim, thin, scar, elderly, muscular, in his teens, well-built, in his mid-forties, overweight, curved, wavy, pale, crooked, freckled, dimples, straight, skinny, beard, shoulder-length, almond-shaped, short, moustache, long-legged, round-shouldered, in his late forties, full

HEIGHT:	
BUILD:	
AGE:	
COMPLEXION:	
FACE:	
HAIR:	
EYES:	
NOSE:	
LIPS:	
SPECIAL FEATURES:	

Unit 1 Describing People

- 4 Match the following adjectives with the nouns below. Some adjectives can be used more than once.**

broad, rosy, clear, bushy, thick, full, upturned, double, hooked, fair, crooked, thin, hollow, deep-set, curly, puffy, clean-shaven, pale, oval, spotty, dark

- | | | | |
|---------|------------|----------|-----------|
| 1 | eyebrows | 6 | face |
| 2 | eyes | 7 | lips |
| 3 | complexion | 8 | cheeks |
| 4 | nose | 9 | hair |
| 5 | chin | 10 | shoulders |

- 2 Willy is in his mid twenties. He has an oval face and long curly hair. He ties it back in a pony-tail. He has a big kitchen. He likes to cook for his friends.
- 3 Helen is dark-skinned. She has beautiful almond-shaped eyes. She dyes her hair. It makes her look younger than she is.
- 4 Marcy's mother is an attractive woman. She has long blond hair. She wears her hair in a bun.

- 5 The man in the photograph is wanted by the police. Look at the picture and the text and try to fill in the missing words. Then, listen to the cassette to find out if your answers were correct. Why is there no description of his personality?**

A dangerous prisoner escaped this morning from Spurswall prison. He is believed to be at large in the Waxerton area and police are warning the public not to approach him as he is likely to react violently.

Neville Slatter is 6 foot 3 inches tall and quite 1) with 2) shoulders. He is 54 years old and unshaven with a 3) jaw, a large nose and 4) lips. He has 5) untidy brown hair and is bald on top. He also has a 6) on his right cheek.



Should you see this man, or if you have knowledge of his whereabouts, please contact your local police station.

- 7 Use the adjectives listed below to complete the character descriptions.**

honest, reserved, outgoing, frank, tactless, persuasive, trustworthy, fussy

- 1 Tina is a very person. She is capable of convincing you to do almost anything she wants.
- 2 Sarah can be on occasion. She often says things that offend people.
- 3 Jim is very; he always says exactly what he is thinking.
- 4 Stephanie is one of the most people I know; she would never consider doing anything illegal.
- 5 My little sister is very about what she eats; there are very few foods she likes.
- 6 Anna is a very person who hardly ever lets her feelings show.
- 7 Mark is extremely ; when it comes to keeping secrets, he will never tell a soul.
- 8 Annabel is a(n) person who loves meeting people and making new friends.

Avoid beginning all sentences in the same way as this will make your composition boring. Use a variety of structures, trying to link the sentences together.

Instead of writing: *She is a pretty girl. She has an oval face.,* you can write: *She is a pretty girl with an oval face.*

Look at the examples suggested below:

He has wrinkles. They make him look older.

He has wrinkles which make him look older.

She is a beautiful woman. She wears designer clothes.

She is a beautiful woman who wears designer clothes.

She has long hair. She wears her hair in a pony-tail.

She wears her long hair in a pony-tail.

He has a big garden. He grows vegetables in the garden.

He has a big garden where he grows vegetables.

- 6 Rewrite the sentences by linking them together as illustrated in the examples above.**

- 1 David Keen was well-built. He had fine wrinkles around his eyes. They showed when he laughed.

8 Decide which adjectives describe positive or negative qualities. Choose any five of them and write sentences justifying each quality, then write a short paragraph describing the character of one of your relatives.

patient, boring, pessimistic, mean, ambitious, generous, mature, interesting, hostile, immature, friendly, impatient, tactful, good-natured, short-tempered, thick-skinned, easy-going, hard-working, deceitful, fair, shy, helpful, aggressive, reserved, outgoing, polite, cheerful

Positive Qualities	Negative Qualities
patient	boring

e.g. My grandmother is very patient; she takes time and care with everything she does. etc.

Sentences can be linked together in a variety of ways. Read the examples and say which words are used to link descriptions of similar qualities and which to join descriptions of opposing qualities.

Similar qualities (both positive or both negative)

e.g. She is kind-hearted. She is cooperative.
*She is kind-hearted **and also** cooperative.*
*She is kind-hearted **and** cooperative **as well**.*
*She is kind-hearted, **as well as (being)** cooperative.*
***In addition to** being kind-hearted, she is **also** cooperative.*
*She is **both** kind-hearted **and** cooperative.*

Opposing qualities (one positive and one negative)

e.g. He is usually well-behaved. He can be naughty at times.
*He is usually well-behaved **but** can be naughty at times.*
*He is usually well-behaved; **in spite of this/nevertheless/ however**, he can be naughty at times.*
***Although/In spite of the fact that** he is usually well-behaved, he can be naughty at times.*

9 Rewrite the following sentences using linking words/phrases from the table above.

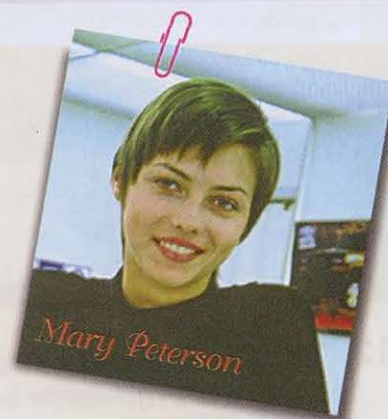
- 1 He is humorous. He has a tendency to be immature.
- 2 He is kind-hearted. He can, on occasion, be absent-minded.
- 3 She is enthusiastic. She is cooperative.
- 4 She has a pleasant personality. She can be shy and unsociable.
- 5 He is well-balanced. He has a sensitive nature.
- 6 He has a generous disposition. From time to time he can be aggressive.

10 You are going to hear a conversation between two company executives who are trying to decide which of the two people below should be promoted.

Read the information and try to fill in the missing adjectives, then listen to find out if your answers were correct.



..... ; he has doubled clientele
 ; he uses his own judgement to make decisions
 ; he works well with employees
 ; he is never late for work



..... ; she has been with the company for many years
 ; she has difficulty in facing customers
 ; if her work is criticised, she sometimes bursts into tears