

## 8

## Describing people: personality

## A

## Intellectual ability

lots of ability	intelligent    bright    clever    sharp    shrewd able    gifted    talented    brainy (informal)
lacking ability	stupid    foolish    simple    silly    brainless    daft dumb    dim    thick (the last five are predominantly informal words, and they can all be offensive)
clever, in a negative way, using brains to trick or deceive	cunning    crafty    sly

## B

## Attitudes towards life

Amal is **pessimistic** while Nia is **optimistic** – he always expects the worst to happen while she looks on the bright side.

It is strange that one of the twins is so **extroverted** while the other is so **introverted** – Ben loves being the focus of attention while Jake prefers to be alone with his thoughts.

I feel very **tense** (or **wound up** / **stressed out\*\***) after a very busy day at work but, after a hot bath, I'll soon feel **relaxed**.

Eva is very **sensible** – she'd never do anything stupid. In other words, she's very practical and **down-to-earth**.

Roberto is very **sensitive** – he gets very **upset** (or **worked-up**, more informal), if he feels people are criticising him.

## C

## Attitude towards other people

Enjoying others' company: **sociable**    **gregarious\***

Disagreeing with others: **quarrelsome**    **argumentative**

Taking pleasure in others' pain: **cruel**    **sadistic**

Relaxed in attitude to self and others: **easy-going**    **even-tempered**    **laid-back\*\***

Not polite to others: **impolite**    **rude**    **ill-mannered**    **discourteous\***

Telling the truth to others: **honest**    **trustworthy**    **reliable**    **sincere**

Unhappy if others have what you do not have yourself: **jealous**    **envious**

## D

## One person's meat is another person's poison

Some characteristics can be either positive or negative depending on your point of view. The words in the right-hand column mean roughly the same as the words in the left-hand column except that they have negative rather than positive connotations.

positive associations	negative associations
determined	obstinate    stubborn    pig-headed
thrifty    economical	stingy    mean    tight-fisted    miserly*
self-assured    confident	self-important    arrogant    full of yourself**
unconventional    original	eccentric    odd    peculiar    weird**
frank    direct    open	blunt    abrupt    brusque    curt
broad-minded	unprincipled    permissive
enquiring*	inquisitive    nosy**
generous	extravagant
innocent	naive
ambitious	pushy**
assertive	aggressive    bossy**

\* These words are much more common in written than in spoken English.

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# Exercises

## 8.1 Match the words on the left with their opposites on the right.

- |               |                          |                |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1 clever      | <input type="checkbox"/> | a introverted  |
| 2 extroverted | <input type="checkbox"/> | b tight-fisted |
| 3 rude        | <input type="checkbox"/> | c courteous    |
| 4 cruel       | <input type="checkbox"/> | d gregarious   |
| 5 generous    | <input type="checkbox"/> | e kind-hearted |
| 6 unsociable  | <input type="checkbox"/> | f dim          |

## 8.2 Do you think that the speaker likes or dislikes the people in these sentences? Reword each sentence to give the opposite impression (negative rather than positive or vice versa).

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 Carmen's very thrifty. <i>Likes - Carmen's very stingy.</i> | 5 Nico's quite bossy.            |
| 2 Molly's usually frank.                                      | 6 I find Marcus self-important.  |
| 3 Grace is quite broad-minded.                                | 7 Don't you think James is nosy? |
| 4 Sam can be aggressive.                                      | 8 Freya is very original.        |

## 8.3 Pair the words that have similar meanings.

*brainless - silly*

brainless	curt	gifted	rude	tense
brusque	direct	honest	sensible	tight-fisted
crafty	down-to-earth	impolite	silly	trustworthy
cunning	frank	miserly	talented	wound up

## 8.4 Magazines often publish questionnaires which are supposed to analyse aspects of your personality. Look at the words below and match them to the corresponding question.

pessimistic	argumentative	sensitive	sociable
extravagant	assertive	inquisitive	reliable

- If you arrange to meet at 7 pm, do you arrive at 7 pm? *reliable*
- When you have a problem, do you think the worst will happen? .....
- Do you find it easy to tell your boss if you feel he or she has treated you badly? .....
- Do you always look out of the window if you hear a car draw up? .....
- Do you often buy your friends presents for no particular reason? .....
- Do you frequently disagree with what other people say? .....
- Do you lie awake at night if someone has said something unkind to you? .....
- Do you prefer to be in the company of other people? .....

## 8.5 What questions like those in 8.4 could you ask to find out if a person is the following?

- |   |                 |             |                |
|---|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 thrifty <i>Do you use up leftover food?</i> |                 |             |                |
| 2 blunt                                       | 4 intelligent   | 6 original  | 8 stressed out |
| 3 sensible                                    | 5 even-tempered | 7 obstinate |                |

## 8.6

Over to you

Choose two people who are important in your life. Describe them using adjectives in this unit and give reasons why you chose each adjective.

EXAMPLE *My brother is sociable because he loves being with other people.*