

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.

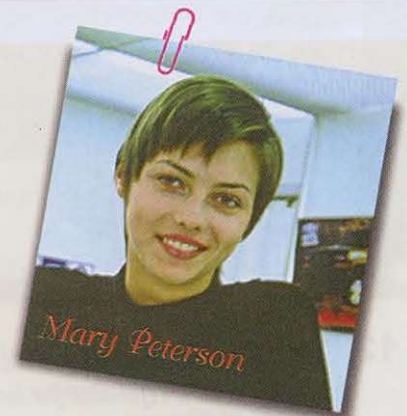
- 1 He is humorous. He has a tendency to be immature.
- 2 He is kind-hearted. He can, on occasion, be absent-minded.
- 3 She is enthusiastic. She is cooperative.
- 4 She has a pleasant personality. She can be shy and unsociable.
- 5 He is well-balanced. He has a sensitive nature.
- 6 He has a generous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



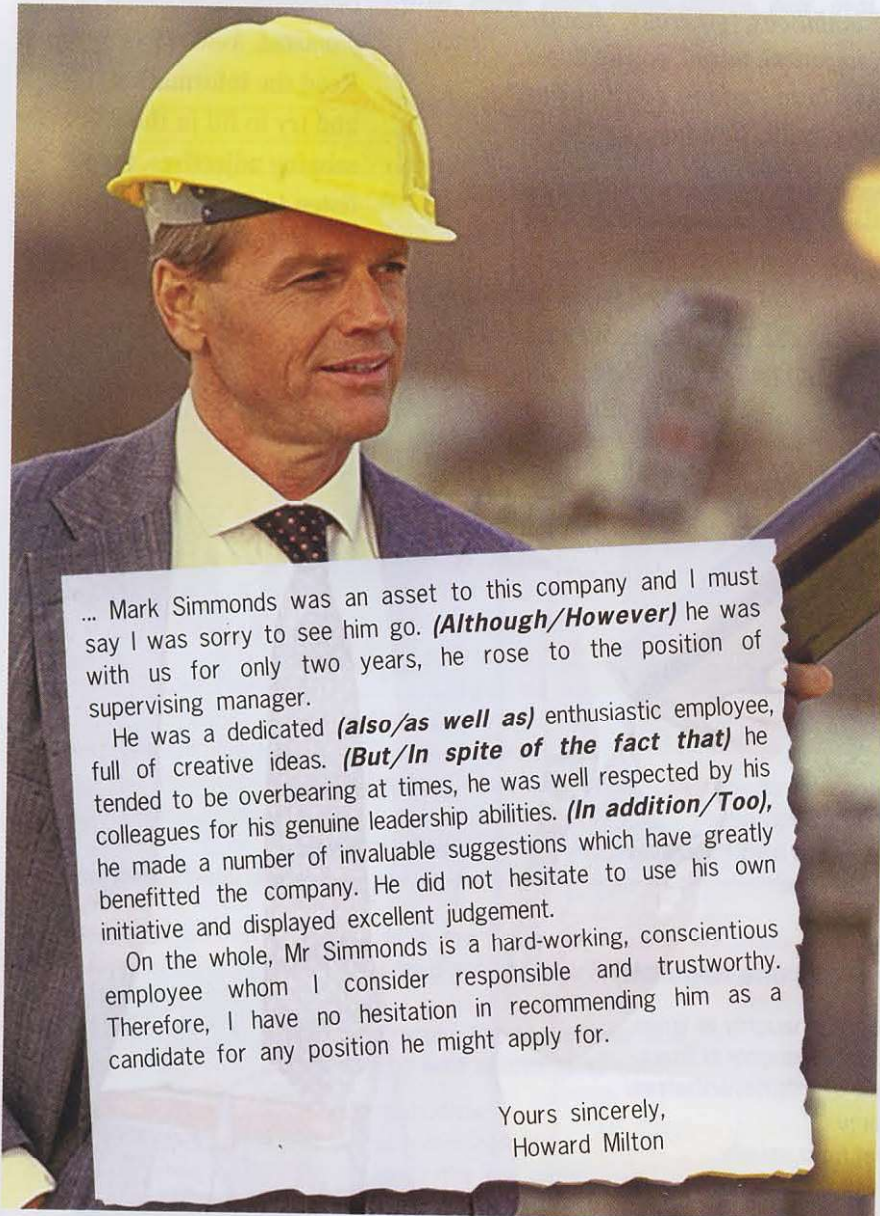
..... ; he has doubled clientele
 ; he uses his own judgement to make decisions
 ; he works well with employees
 ; he is never late for work



..... ; 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

Unit 1 Describing People

- 11** Read the following extract and underline the correct linking words/phrases. Then list the positive and negative qualities mentioned. Where do you think this extract is taken from? Why do you think there is no description of physical appearance?



... Mark Simmonds was an asset to this company and I must say I was sorry to see him go. **(Although/However)** he was with us for only two years, he rose to the position of supervising manager.

He was a dedicated **(also/as well as)** enthusiastic employee, full of creative ideas. **(But/In spite of the fact that)** he tended to be overbearing at times, he was well respected by his colleagues for his genuine leadership abilities. **(In addition/Too),** he made a number of invaluable suggestions which have greatly benefitted the company. He did not hesitate to use his own initiative and displayed excellent judgement.

On the whole, Mr Simmonds is a hard-working, conscientious employee whom I consider responsible and trustworthy. Therefore, I have no hesitation in recommending him as a candidate for any position he might apply for.


Yours sincerely,
Howard Milton

- 12** You used to be the employer of the person whose qualities are listed below. Write a reference for her. Include a variety of appropriate linking words/phrases, using the model in exercise 11 as a guide. You can start as shown in the example.

reliable, honest, professional, determined, knowledgeable, impatient, cheerful

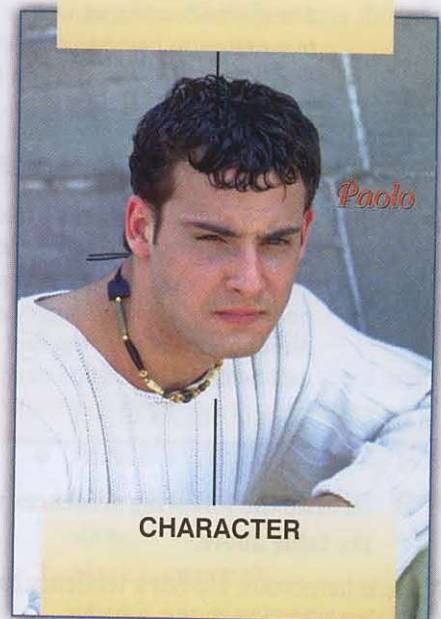
e.g. *Jennifer Grant worked as a teacher for Brighton Primary School for two and a half years.*

- 13** *Pietro's brother, Paolo, is going to study abroad. He will be staying with a couple of Pietro's English friends. His friends are going to meet Paolo at the airport but they haven't seen him since he was little, so Pietro has decided to write them a letter with all the necessary information. What information should Pietro include in his letter?*

-  **14** Listen to the letter Pietro wrote and make notes under each heading. Then, using this information, describe Paolo.

APPEARANCE

CLOTHES



CHARACTER

HOBBIES/
ACTIVITIES

Manner and Mannerism

Instead of only using adjectives to describe a person's character, you can also include examples of the way they speak/look/smile, etc. in order to give a clearer picture and to make the description more lively. *e.g. His blue eyes light up whenever he sees his grandchild.* Although the adjectives **kind** and **affectionate** could be used to describe the person, giving examples of mannerism makes the description more vivid.

15 Read the following descriptions of mannerisms and match them with the adjectives below.

shy, loving, vain, inattentive, aggressive

- Whenever Roger got involved in an argument, he would shout and become quite violent.
- Sue is often seen with her children, holding them close, stroking their hair and speaking softly to them.
- When everybody else is busy studying, Sheila spends her time staring at the ceiling, yawning and playing with her hair.
- She blushes when she talks to people she does not know and her palms sweat.
- She always runs her fingers through her golden hair and admires her reflection in the mirror before she goes on stage.

16 Read the model composition and answer the following questions:

- In which paragraph does the writer describe Archie's personality?
- Which phrases describe manner/ mannerism?
- What tenses are used and why?
- What are the writer's feelings about Archie?

Describe a person you will never forget

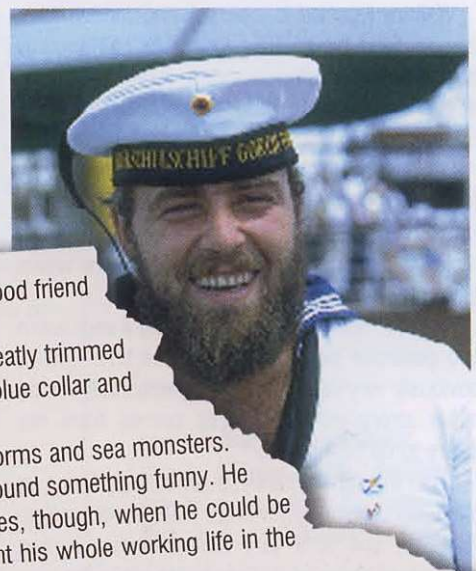
I first met Archie about thirty years ago when I was a child. Archie was a sailor and a very good friend of my father's. As we lived near a major port, he would visit us whenever his ship came in. He was a tall, broad man with short brown hair, sparkling blue eyes and a wide smile. His neatly trimmed beard made him look older than he was. He always wore a white sailor's uniform with a dark blue collar and a round white hat.

Archie had a wonderful personality. My brother and I loved it when he told us tall tales of storms and sea monsters. Archie was always telling jokes and his whole body would shake with laughter whenever he found something funny. He was very generous and never forgot to bring us exotic gifts from his travels. There were times, though, when he could be stubborn and he would frown angrily and stamp his feet. He enjoyed being a sailor and spent his whole working life in the Navy, even though many better opportunities came up.

When he was not travelling, he worked on his sailing boat at home. He managed to build it all by himself and went sailing on it in his free time. When he retired, he bought a fisherman's cottage in New Zealand and moved there. Although we never see him any more, I will always treasure those childhood memories of him.

17 Read the following descriptions and say which quality each one describes.

- When little Tommy wants a new toy, he screams until his parents buy it for him.
- Jim tends to stand by himself at parties and hardly ever meets anyone's eye.
- When Sarah listens to sad music her eyes fill with tears.
- Whenever he received bad news, John would remain quite still and expressionless.
- Little Annie makes a face and sticks out her tongue each time she wants to show she doesn't approve of someone.
- Whenever someone disagrees with Louise, she gets red in the face and shouts until she gets her own way.
- Jerry is always ready with a smile and a good joke. I've never seen him cross or sad.



Unit 1 Describing People

Narrative techniques (use of direct speech, weather description, use of dramatic language to create mystery/suspense, reference to feelings/moods, etc.) can be used when describing people. This will make your composition more interesting to the reader. See how an ordinary beginning can be made more exciting:

Instead of saying: *I first met Steven, the secretary of the manager of Sunnington Ltd, last Monday.*

You could say:

- *A cold wind was blowing down the street last Monday morning as I pushed open the heavy glass door of Sunnington Ltd. Chilled and nervous, I walked up to Mr Tibbs' secretary. A pair of friendly dark eyes met mine. So this was Steven! (weather description, your feelings, suspense)*
- *"Mr Tibbs is at a meeting. Would you like to wait? He'll be about ten minutes." He had a sharp clear voice, and a narrow intelligent face. I could see why Mr Tibbs, the manager of Sunnington Ltd, spoke so highly of Steven. (direct speech, mystery)*

18 Read the following sentences and rewrite them using narrative techniques.

- I was introduced to John McKay, the painter, at Suzie's party on Saturday.
- We first met Mr Simmons on a Tuesday morning when the head teacher introduced him to us as the supply teacher who was taking Mrs Perkins' place.
- I first heard about Tom Cruise two years ago.

19 Read the following models. Which is purely descriptive? Which includes narrative techniques? Give the paragraph outline.

MODEL A

Whitney Houston is a person one cannot fail to admire. Over the past ten years she has become both a popular singer and a famous actress, appearing in successful films such as *The Bodyguard*.

Looking at Whitney, it is not difficult to see why she is so popular. She has gorgeous black hair, kind brown eyes and a beautiful smile which lights up her whole face. The elegant clothes she wears always complement her perfect figure.

Whitney has a reputation for being a very warm and generous person. At the same time, she is obviously very determined and can sometimes be rather strong-willed, but this comes from her desire to do things well.

In her free time Whitney, a sociable person, can often be seen at glamorous Hollywood parties. However, she is a very family-minded person who would never let her social life get in the way of her relationship with her daughter.

All in all, Whitney is an incredible woman. Few people manage to fit as much into their lives as she does. It must be exhausting, but she always manages to look fresh and beautiful for the cameras.



Describe a famous person

MODEL B

I was shaking with fear and nervousness as I waited to interview the star of *The Bodyguard*, Whitney Houston. I was a rather nervous and inexperienced young journalist back then, and interviewing Whitney in a hotel room in Los Angeles was my first big job.

As she opened the door, the first things I noticed about her appearance were her kind brown eyes and her beautiful smile which seemed to light up her whole face. As always, she was dressed elegantly in a stunning long dress which really complemented her perfect figure.

As we chatted, I discovered that Whitney certainly deserves her reputation for being kind and generous and I soon relaxed in her presence. At the same time I noticed a determined side to her, but when I told her that she sometimes comes across as very strong-willed she smiled and told me that this probably came from her desire to do things well.

When she is not working, Whitney, a sociable character, can often be found at glamorous Hollywood parties. Her family life, though, seems to be more important to her than her social life. Her eyes gleamed proudly when I glanced at the photograph of her daughter. Her reaction revealed another side of her character, that of a caring mother.

I felt sad when it was time for me to leave as I had found Whitney to be an incredible woman. I have never met anybody else who could lead such an active life, yet still manage to look fresh and beautiful for the cameras.

20 Write any two of the topics below in the appropriate style using 120-180 words.

- 1 Your teacher has asked you to write a description of your favourite classmate. Write your description for your teacher.
- 2 A popular children's TV programme has asked its viewers to send in a description of a relative of theirs, commenting on how this person has influenced them positively or negatively. The best description will win a prize. Write your entry for the competition.
- 3 Your teacher has asked you to write a composition describing the person you admire most from history. Write your description for your teacher.