

3 Describing people's appearance

A General

Positive: beautiful is generally used to describe women; handsome is used to describe men; good-looking is used for both; pretty is another positive word to describe a woman (often a girl) meaning 'attractive and nice to look at'.

Negative: ugly is the most negative word to describe someone; plain is more polite.

B Height and build

tall and slim medium height and build short and fat medium height and very muscular

Note: Another word for slim is thin, but slim has a more positive meaning, e.g. John is lovely and slim, but his brother is terribly thin. Skinny also has the same meaning but is very negative. It is not very polite to say someone is fat; overweight is more neutral and polite.

C Hair

straight wavy curly

blond(e) light brown dark brown black

D Special features

The man on the left has got very pale skin (= white skin). He also has broad shoulders, with a small scar at the top of his left arm. The other man has dark skin. He also has a beard and moustache and quite a hairy chest and a tattoo.

E Asking questions about a person's appearance

- Q: What does she look like?
 A: She's quite tall, with short fair hair.
 Q: How tall is she?
 A: About 1 metre 65.
 Q: How much does she weigh?
 A: I don't know and it may be rude to ask. Probably about 45 kilos.

Exercises

43.1 Complete these sentences in a suitable way. (More than one answer may be possible.)

- 1 She's got blonde
- 2 He's got very pale
- 3 They've both got curly
- 4 I would say he was medium
- 5 Her brother has got very broad
- 6 She doesn't like men with hairy
- 7 Last time I saw him he had grown a
- 8 He's got very muscular
- 9 Both men were very good
- 10 All of them have got dark

43.2 Replace the underlined word in each sentence with a word which is either more suitable or more polite.

- 1 He told me he met a handsome girl in the disco last night.
- 2 She's beautiful but her younger sister is really quite ugly.
- 3 I think Peter is getting a bit fat, don't you?
- 4 Most people want to stay slim, but not as skinny as that girl over there.
- 5 I think she's hoping she'll meet a few beautiful men at the tennis club.

43.3 You want to know about the following:

- someone's general appearance
- their height
- their weight

What questions do you need to ask? Complete these questions.

- What
- How
- How much

Now answer these questions.

- 1 How tall are you?
- 2 How would you describe your build?
- 3 How much do you weigh?
- 4 What kind of hair have you got?
- 5 What colour is it?
- 6 Would you like it to be different? If so, what would you like?
- 7 Do you think you have any special features?
- 8 Are there any special features you would like to have?
- 9 Do you like beards?
- 10 Can you think of a famous woman you would describe as beautiful, and a famous man you would describe as good-looking?

If possible, ask another person these questions.