

## Describing people: appearance

**A** Hair, face, skin and complexion /kəm'plekʃən/



She's got straight hair and she's thin-faced (or she's got a thin face).



She's got long, wavy hair and she's round-faced (or she's got a round face).



He's got a crew-cut.



He's got receding hair and a few wrinkles /'rɪŋkəlz/.



He used to have black hair but now it's gone grey, almost white.



He's got a beard and moustache /mə'stæʃ/ and has a chubby face.



What sort of person would you find attractive? Blonde, fair, dark or ginger-haired / red-haired.  
She has such beautiful auburn hair. /'ɔ:bən/ [red-brown]  
Fair and dark can be used for hair, complexion or skin.

**B**

Height and build



a rather plump or stout man



a slim woman [positive]



an obese couple /əʊ'bi:z/ [negative, very fat]

Fat may sound impolite. Instead we often say a bit overweight. If someone is broad and solid, we can say they are stocky. A person with good muscles can be well-built or muscular. If someone is terribly thin and refuses to eat, they may be anorexic /æno'reksɪk/.

**C**

General appearance

She's a very smart and elegant woman, always well-dressed; her husband is quite the opposite, very scruffy and untidy-looking / messy-looking. He's very good-looking, but his friend's rather unattractive. Do you think beautiful women are always attracted to handsome men? I don't. I think personality matters most.

First impressions are always important. [your first reaction to someone]

**TIP**

The suffix **-ish** is useful for describing people (see Unit 8). She's tallish. He has brownish hair. He must be thirtyish.

## Exercises

37.1 Answer these remarks with the opposite description.

EXAMPLE A: I thought you said he was the short, chubby one.

B: No, no, not at all, he's the tall, thin-faced one.

1 A: Was that his brother, the dark-skinned, wavy-haired one?

B: No, completely the opposite, his brother's ...

2 A: She's always quite well-dressed, so I've heard.

B: What! Who told you that? Every time I see her, she's ...

3 A: So Charlene's that rather plump, fair-haired woman, is she?

B: No, you're looking at the wrong one. Charlene's ...

4 A: So, tell us about the new boss; good looking?

B: No, I'm afraid not; rather ...

5 A: I don't know why, but I expected the tour-guide to be middle-aged or elderly.

B: No, apparently she's only ...

37.2 Write one sentence to describe each of these people, giving information about their hair and face, their height and build and general appearance.

1 you yourself 3 a neighbour

2 your best friend 4 your ideal of a handsome man / a beautiful woman

Now, in the same way, describe somebody very famous, give some extra clues about them, e.g. He's/She's a *pop star/politician*. Can someone else guess who you are describing?

37.3 From these jumbled words, find combinations for describing people, as in the example. Not all of the words are on the left-hand page. Some of the combinations are hyphenated. Use a dictionary if necessary. You can use the words more than once.



EXAMPLE *jean-looking*

looking haired middle mixed round complexion stocky faced over well dressed legged  
aged long race weight  
red aged build tanned

37.4 WANTED! MISSING! Complete the gaps in these police posters.

**WANTED FOR MURDER**

Ian Prowse  
White, height 6ft,  
.....-faced,  
.....hair,  
.....skin

**Wanted for Armed Robbery**

Sandra King  
White, height 5ft 4,  
.....hair,  
.....build,  
.....faced

**Missing**

Louise Fox  
age 7,  
Asian appearance  
.....,  
.....,  
.....hair.

**Wanted dead or alive**

Jack 'Dagger' Flagstone 6ft  
....., with  
.....and  
.....build.

**Follow-up:** Make a collection of descriptions of people from newspapers and magazines. Court/crime reports, celebrity and gossip pages of magazines, and the personal columns where people are seeking partners are good places to start.