

# 34 Describing people – character

## Intellectual ability

Ability: intelligent bright clever smart shrewd able gifted talented brainy (colloquial)

Lacking ability: stupid foolish half-witted simple silly brainless daft dumb dim (the last four are predominantly colloquial words)

Clever, in a negative way, using brains to trick or deceive: cunning crafty sly

## Attitudes towards life

Looking on either the bright or the black side of things: optimistic pessimistic

Outward-looking or inward-looking (i.e. to the world around one or to one's own inner world): extroverted introverted

Calm or not calm with regard to attitude to life: relaxed tense

Practical, not dreamy in approach to life: sensible down-to-earth

Feeling things very intensely: sensitive

## Attitudes 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

Not polite to others: impolite rude ill-mannered discourteous

Telling the truth to others: honest trustworthy reliable sincere

Unhappy if others have what one does not have oneself: jealous envious

## 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.

determined	→	obstinate stubborn pig-headed
thrifty/economical	→	miserly mean tight-fisted
self-assured	→	self-important arrogant full of oneself (colloquial)
assertive	→	aggressive bossy (colloquial)
original	→	peculiar weird eccentric odd
frank/direct/open	→	blunt abrupt brusque curt
broad-minded	→	unprincipled permissive
inquiring	→	inquisitive nosy (colloquial)
generous	→	extravagant
innocent	→	naive
ambitious	→	pushy (colloquial)

(See also Units 12, 73 and 78.)

# Exercises

## 34.1 Match these words with their opposites.

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1 clever      | introverted  |
| 2 extroverted | tight-fisted |
| 3 rude        | courteous    |
| 4 cruel       | gregarious   |
| 5 generous    | kind-hearted |
| 6 unsociable  | half-witted  |

## 34.2 Do you think that the speaker likes or dislikes the people s/he is talking about?

- |                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Di's very thrifty.       | 5 Dick's quite bossy.         |
| 2 Molly's usually frank.   | 6 I find Dave self-important. |
| 3 Liz's quite broad-minded | 7 Don't you think Jim's nosy? |
| 4 Sam can be aggressive.   | 8 Jill is very original.      |

## 34.3 Reword the sentences above to give the opposite impression. *Example: Di's very stingy.*

## 34.4 Magazines often publish questionnaires which are supposed to analyse your character for you. Look at the words below and then match them to the question which aims to decide whether a person is like that.

*Example:* If you arrange to meet at 7 p.m., do you arrive at 7 p.m.? *Reliable*

- |             |               |             |          |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------|
| pessimistic | argumentative | sensitive   | sociable |
| extravagant | assertive     | inquisitive |          |



- Do you prefer to be in the company of other people?
- Look at the picture. Do you think 'my glass is half empty'?
- 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?

## 34.5 What questions like those in 34.4 could you ask to try to find out whether a person is the following:

- |           |               |                 |             |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 thrifty | 3 sensible    | 5 even-tempered | 7 obstinate |
| 2 blunt   | 4 intelligent | 6 original      |             |

## 34.6 Can you complete each of these word forks?

- |         |       |   |                |   |              |
|---------|-------|---|----------------|---|--------------|
| 1 self- | ..... | 2 | .....-tempered | 3 | .....-minded |
|         | ..... |   | .....          |   | .....        |

Write a sentence to illustrate the meanings of each of your words.

## 34.7 Choose five or six adjectives from the opposite page which you think best describe either your own or a friend's character. How do you or your friend demonstrate these characteristics? *Example: Sociable – I am sociable because I love being with other people.*