

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

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.

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.)

35 Relationships

A Types of relationships

Here is a scale showing closeness and distance in relationships in different contexts.

	CLOSER	←	→	MORE DISTANT
<i>friendship:</i>	best friend		good friend	friend
<i>work:</i>	close colleague			colleague/workmate
<i>love/romance:</i>	lover		steady boy/girlfriend	ex-*
<i>marriage:</i>	wife/husband/partner			ex-*

* ex- can be used with or without (informally) another word: She's my ex. (girlfriend, etc.)

Mate is a colloquial word for a good friend. It can also be used in compounds to describe a person you share something with, e.g. classmate, shipmate, workmate, flatmate.

Workmate is usual in non-professional contexts; colleague is more common among professional people.

Fiancé/ée can still be used for someone you are engaged to, but a lot of people feel it is dated nowadays. You will sometimes see husband-/wife-to-be in journalistic style.

English has no universally accepted word for 'person I live with but am not married to', but partner is probably the commonest.

B Liking and not liking someone

core verb	positive	negative
like	love adore worship idolise	dislike hate can't stand loathe
respect	look up to admire	look down on despise
attract	turn s.b. on	repel turn s.b. off
be attracted to	fancy	

She doesn't just like Bob she idolises him! I can't stand him.

I really fancy Lisa, but her friend just turns me off.

Fancy and turn off are informal. Repel is very strong and rather formal.

C Phrases and idioms for relationships

Jo and I get on well with each other. [have a good relationship]

Adrian and Liz don't see eye to eye. [often argue/disagree]

I've fallen out with my parents again. [had arguments]

Tony and Jane have broken up / split up. [ended their relationship]

George is having an affair with his boss. [a sexual relationship, usually secret]

Children should respect their elders. [adults/parents, etc.]

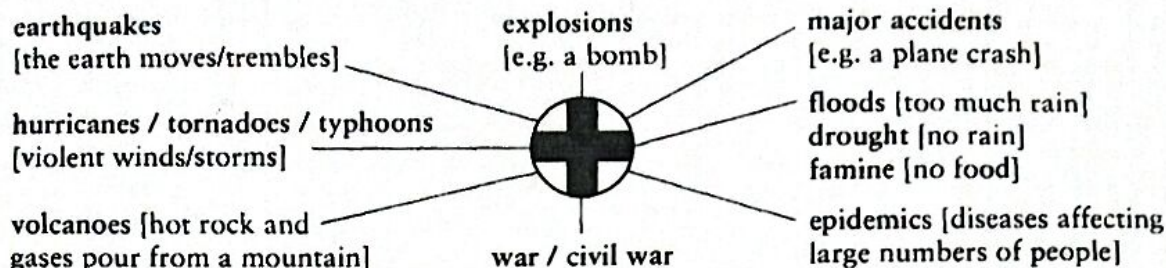
Let's try and make it up. [be friends again after a row]

She's my junior / I'm her senior / I'm senior to her, so she does what she's told. [refers to position/length of service at work]

(See Unit 69 for more words relating to likes and dislikes.)

38 Global problems

Disasters/tragedies



Verbs connected with these words

A volcano has erupted in Indonesia. Hundreds are feared dead.

The flu epidemic spread rapidly throughout the country.

Millions are starving as a result of the famine.

A big earthquake shook the city at noon today.

The area is suffering its worst drought for many years.

Civil war has broken out in the north of the country.

A tornado swept through the islands yesterday.

Remember: injure [people], damage [things]:

200 people were injured and dozens of buildings were damaged in the hurricane.

Words for people involved in disasters/tragedies

The explosion resulted in 300 casualties. [dead and injured people]

The real victims of the civil war are the children left without parents. [those who suffer the results of the disaster]

There were only three survivors. All the other passengers died instantly. [people who live through a disaster]

Thousands of refugees have crossed the border looking for food and shelter.

During the battle, the dead and wounded were flown out in helicopters. [wounded: injured in a battle/by a weapon]

Headlines

Here are some headlines from newspapers all connected with diseases and epidemics. Explanations are given.

disease can be caused by bite from a dog, fox, etc.; very serious

Rabies out of control in many parts of Asia

tropical disease; skin goes yellow

yellow fever figures drop

New **malaria** drug tested

usually caught because of mosquito bites

terrible skin disease; leaves the skin deformed

Minister says fight against **leprosy** goes on

diseases causing sickness, diarrhoea etc.; caused often by infected food and water

Cholera and **typhoid** injections not needed says Tourism Minister

77 Binomials

Binomials are expressions (often idiomatic) where two words are joined by a conjunction (usually 'and'). The order of the words is usually fixed. It is best to use them only in informal situations, with one or two exceptions.

odds and ends: small, unimportant things, e.g. Let's get the main things packed; we can do the odds and ends later.

give and take: a spirit of compromise, e.g. Every relationship needs a bit of give and take to be successful.

You can often tell something is a binomial because of the sound pattern.

Tears are part and parcel of growing up. [part of / belong to]

The boss was ranting and raving at us. [shouting / very angry]

The old cottage has gone to rack and ruin. [ruined/decayed]

He's so prim and proper at work. [rather formal and fussy]

The hotel was a bit rough and ready. [poor standard]

She has to wine and dine important clients. [entertain]

B

Other times, the clue is that the words are near-synonyms.

You can pick and choose; it's up to you. [have a wide choice]

My English is progressing in leaps and bounds. [big jumps]

It's nice to have some peace and quiet. [peace/calm]

The doctor recommended some rest and recreation. [relaxation]

First and foremost, you must work hard. [first / most importantly]

Many grammar words combine to form binomials.

There are cafés here and there. [scattered round]

We've had meetings on and off. [occasionally]

I've been running back and forth all day. [to and from somewhere]

To and fro can be used just like back and forth.

He is unemployed and down and out. [without a home or money]

She's better now, and out and about again. [going out]

She ran up and down the street. [in both directions]

Your language probably has many binomials. Make sure those which look similar in English have the same word order as your language. These four are very neutral binomials and can be used in formal or informal situations. Try translating them.

A black and white film, please. Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please!

She ran back and forth. There was hot and cold water in every room.

E

Binomials linked by words other than and.

You've got your sweater on back to front. [the wrong way]

He won't help her; she'll have to sink or swim. [survive or fail]

Slowly but surely, I realised the boat was sinking. [gradually]

Sooner or later, you'll learn your lesson. [some time/day]

She didn't want to be just friends; it had to be all or nothing.

Well I'm sorry, that's all I can offer you; take it or leave it.

It's about the same distance as from here to Dublin, give or take a few miles. [perhaps a mile or two more, or a mile or two less]