

**big**<sup>1</sup>

S1 W1

/big/

adjective

(*comparative* **bigger**, *superlative* **biggest**)

**1** **size** SIZEBIG of more than average size or amount:

*a big house*

*I need a bigger desk.*

*She had a big grin on her face.*

*a big increase in crime*

*Los Angeles is the biggest city in California.*

*The garage isn't big enough for two cars.*

*When they lose, they lose **in a big way** (= to a large degree) .*

*There was this **great big** (= extremely big) **spider in the sink**.*

**2** **important** IMPORTANT important and serious:

*a big decision*

*Buying your own house is a big commitment.*

*The big game is on Friday.*

*There's a **big difference** between understanding something and being able to explain it to others.*

*Everyone was getting ready for the **big day** (= a day when an important event will happen) .*

**3** SUCCESSFULPOPULAR **popular/successful** successful or popular, especially in business or entertainment:

*Julia Roberts became a big star.*

*She's very big in Australia.*

*After years as a small-time actor, he suddenly **made it big** (= became very successful) **in Hollywood**.*

**the big boys** (= the most powerful people or companies)

→ BIG CHEESE,

BIG NOISE,

→ **big shot** AT SHOT<sup>1</sup> (14),

→ BIG TIME

#### 4 **older**

a) **big sister/brother** FAMILY

your older sister or brother

b) OLD/NOT NEW

older or more like an adult – used especially by children or when you are talking to children:

*Come on, don't cry. You're a big girl now.*

5 **large degree** A LOT [only before noun] (informal) LOT/LARGE NUMBER OR AMOUNT

a)

doing something to a large degree:

**a big eater/drinker/spender etc**

*Des is a big gambler, you know.*

**be a big fan/admirer of somebody/something**

b)

done to a large degree or with great energy:

**give somebody a big hug/kiss**

*Mama gave me a big hug.*

**give somebody a big hand** (= clap loudly)

6 **BAD | bad** [only before noun] (informal) used to emphasize how bad something is:

*AIDS remains a **big problem** in many parts of the world.*

*Buying that house was a **big mistake**.*

*I never said that, you **big liar**!*

7 **have big ideas/plans** PLAN

to have impressive plans for the future:

*I've got big plans for this place.*

**8 be big on something** (spoken)

a)

to like something very much:

*I'm not big on kids.*

b)

to have a lot of a quality or feature:

*The new BMW is big on safety features.*

**9 what's the big idea?** (spoken) ASK A QUESTION

used when someone has done something annoying, especially when you want them to explain why they did it:

*Hey, what's the big idea? Who said you could use my computer?*

**10 | generous** it is big of somebody to do something (spoken)

a) KIND

used to say that someone is very kind or generous to do something

b) UNKIND

used when you really think that someone is not kind or helpful at all:

*£5! That was big of her!*

**11 big mouth** (spoken) TELL A SECRET

someone who has a big mouth cannot be trusted to keep things secret:

*I'm sorry. I shouldn't have opened my big mouth.*

**me and my big mouth** (= said when you wish you had not told someone a secret)

→ BIGMOUTH

**12 | letters** (informal) big letters are CAPITALS, for example G, R, A etc

**13 | words** (informal) big words are long or unusual and are difficult to read or understand

**14 be/get too big for your boots** (informal) BOAST

to be too proud of yourself

**15 use/wield the big stick** (informal) THREATEN

to threaten to use your power to get what you want

**16 a big girl's blouse** (BrE) (informal)

someone, especially a man, who is not brave

**17 big up (to/for) somebody** (spoken informal)

used when you want to praise someone:

*Big up to Kelly Holmes! She ran a superb race.*

→ **think big** AT THINK<sup>1</sup> (39)

## THESAURUS

**big**: *a big city | a big guy | a big mistake | Lack of funding is the biggest problem. | Getting a car has made a big difference to my life.*

**large** a slightly more formal word than **big**, used to describe objects and amounts: *a large bowl | Large areas of the forest have been destroyed. | The museum attracts a large number of visitors.*

**major** [only before noun] big and important: *Pollution is a major problem. | There has been a major change in government policy.*

**considerable/ substantial** quite big – used especially about amounts: *They have spent a considerable amount of money on the project. | A substantial amount of heat is lost through the windows. | He had a considerable influence on young musicians.*

### **very big**

**huge/ massive/ enormous** extremely big: *The table was enormous. | a huge explosion | Their house is huge. | There is a huge amount of work to be done. | There has been a massive*

*increase in oil prices. | The company is massive, operating in 150 countries. | A massive fire destroyed more than thirty homes. | He's been under an enormous amount of stress recently. | The changes will have an enormous impact.*

**great** [only before noun] very big – used especially to describe the level or number of something: *He achieved great success in America. | The college offers a great number of courses. | a great advantage*

**vast** extremely big – used about areas, distances, numbers, or amounts: *vast areas of rainforest | A vast number of tourists visit the island every year.*

**gigantic** extremely big and much bigger than other things of the same type: *Gigantic waves crashed onto the beach.*

**colossal** extremely big – used about amounts or objects: *James ran up a colossal phone bill. | a colossal statue of Napoleon*

**tremendous** having an extremely big effect: *There have been some tremendous changes. | My new job will be a tremendous challenge. | The children were making a tremendous amount of noise.*

## big<sup>2</sup>

verb

(bigged, bigging)

### **big** somebody/ something ↔ **up**

phrasal verb

(BrE) (spoken) (informal)

**1** to say that someone or something is very good, especially in public:  
*He's always on TV bigging up his new band.*

### **2 big it up**

to spend a lot of money and enjoy yourself in a social situation, in a

