

# Negative Comparisons: Guidelines

## Comparisons

A comparison is the act of evaluating two or more things by determining the relevant characteristics of each thing to be compared, and then determining which characteristics of each are similar to the other, which are different, and to what degree.

There are **three kinds of comparisons**: neutral, positive and negative. **This survey deals with negative comparisons.**

A comparison can be **neutral** if it does not contain words that have a strong positive or negative meaning.

*Your car is as green as an olive.*

*You are as tall as a tree.*

In these example, the comparison is based on an objective observation and does not imply anything positive or negative about the car or the person.

A comparison can be **positive** if it either contains words that themselves have a positive meaning, or the wording of the comparison makes it clear that it is meant in a positive way.

*You remind me of a summer day.*

*Your painting is as vivid as a red sunset.*

A comparison can be **negative** if it either contains words that themselves have a negative meaning, or the wording of the comparison makes it clear that it is meant in a negative way.

*Your expression reminds me of a thunderstorm.*

*With that dress, you look less beautiful than usual.*

## Avoiding Insulting Comparisons

It is important to note that some negative comparisons are actually **insults**. These kinds of insulting comparisons are **not part of this survey** and should be avoided completely.

An **insult** is an expression or statement (or sometimes behaviour) which is disrespectful or scornful. An insult may be accurate, but at the same time abusive, such as the word *inbred*.

There are two kinds of insulting comparisons: explicitly and implicitly insulting comparisons.

**Explicit insults** are insults in which individual words themselves have an (unambiguously) offensive nature. Examples are:

*You're such an idiot that you can't even hold a conversation with a child.*

*You look like a piece of scum.*

*Your behaviour makes you look like an asshole.*

You find a large [example list of insulting words here](#). Note that this list may not be exhaustive. None of these insulting words should be used in your answers to the survey.

**Implicit insults** do not contain insulting words but are still perceived as insults.

*Your car looks as if a child had designed it.*

*With your mouth open you look as intelligent as you are.*

*With your weight you have to take 3 seats at the cinema.*

*You look like a toad.*

*Your drawings have the charm of a car crash.*

*Your mouth reminds me of a fish.*

*You eat like a pig.*

Often it is a matter of perception of whether a remark is an insult or not. You should always ask yourself whether you imagine the addressed person to perceive the remark as an insult. You may be hardened, therefore you should imagine how a sensitive person might react.

## Goal of this Survey

In order to make it easier to invent examples, you will be **given a fictional situation to work with**. The situation will be quite general, but still provide some context to work with.

You will be given 4 examples sentences that have **missing slots**. The slots are marked with **brackets [ ]**. Please write a **full sentence** into the text field and fill in the brackets with your own choice of words. Additionally, you are provided with a **free text field** in which you can add an additional example.

In order to decide whether your comparison is insulting or not, you should **consider the situation** you are provided with. Would you say the sentence to the people in this context, without offending them? If the answer is no, your example is probably insulting and you should think of another comparison.

The negative comparison should be **self-contained** and be understandable for anyone knowing English. Please do not assume any prior knowledge. **Please avoid these kind of comparisons:**

*You remind me of my aunt Mary.*

*You are just like the maths teacher I had as a child.*

*You look like the neighbour from across the street.*

*You talk like John Barnes.*

*You remind me of the Miss World runner-up.*

*With your nose you look like Pinocchio.*

These comparisons cannot be understood by everyone because it requires knowing what kind of a person these people are, or who the famous people mentioned are.

Some kinds of comparisons are used very frequently, and thus not really new and creative. We ask you to please **avoid using comparisons** that contain the following terms: **children, young or old people, any kind of animal or any kind of food**.

## Rules for the Survey

- Please vary the type of comparisons and expressions.
- Always write full sentences.
- Please keep your sentences short.
- Avoid repetitive ideas, such as
  - *Your eyes are as angry as a storm*
  - *Your eyes are as dark as a storm*
- Do not invent insulting comparisons.

- Please avoid comparisons that mention **children, young or old people, any kind of animal or any kind of food.**
- Do not use comparisons like *my grandmother, me, your wife, your mom* that are not self-contained.