

Using the dictionary

Finding out what people really mean

- A** Imagine you need to choose a partner to work with on a project. Which of the personal qualities and character traits in the box below would you look for (*approve of*) and which would you want to avoid (*disapprove of*)? Copy the words into the appropriate column of the table.

dogmatic	adaptable	indefatigable	balanced	mediocre	temperamental
consistent	complacent	down to earth	hair-splitting	inconsiderate	
thoughtful	bossy	calculating	committed	flexible	resourceful
					lax

Approve	Disapprove

Now check the words in your dictionary, paying close attention to whether the entry has an *approving* label or a *disapproving* label.

- B** Find a word in the box which could replace each of the words/phrases in bold in the sentences below.

baby	lowly staff members	bar	make-up	huge	partner	detective	sweet
funny	shopping						

- You will be pleased to hear that I finally sold my old bike for the **princely** sum of £10.
- You can usually find Andy at his favourite **watering hole** on a Friday night.
- The best thing to cheer you up if you're feeling miserable is a bit of **retail therapy**.
- Ah, that sounds like your mother calling you, darling. I'd recognise her **dulcet** tones anywhere.
- Jim would like to come out to watch the football with us but his **other half** won't let him!
- We were met at the airport by one of the president's **minions**.
- Would you like to cuddle my **bundle of joy** for a moment? By the way, I think he needs a nappy change.
- Yes, that's right. I'm late and covered in oil because my car broke down. Well done, **Sherlock!**
- What a great joke it was to tie my shoelaces together. Yes, very **droll**.
- Sally isn't ready to go out yet. She hasn't finished putting on her **warpaint**.

The British in particular are well known for their use of irony. When you check the words in your dictionary you will find that many of them have an *ironic* label. Others are just chosen because the speaker wants to be amusing so you will find that these have a *humorous* label. Irony is sometimes funny, so some words have both labels! Make careful notes of which labels you discover.

irony /aɪrəni/ noun (pl. -ies) **1** [U, C] the funny or strange aspect of a situation that is very different from what you expect; a situation like this: *It was one of life's little ironies. ◇ the~(is) that ... The irony is that when he finally got the job, he discovered he didn't like it.* **2** [U] the use of words that say the opposite of what you really mean, often as a joke and with a tone of voice that shows this: *'England is famous for its food,' she said with heavy irony. ◇ There was a note of irony in his voice. ◇ She said it without a hint/trace of irony.* see also DRAMATIC IRONY