

A Intellectual ability

Ability: intelligent bright clever sharp 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

B Attitudes towards life

Amal is **pessimistic** while Nita is **optimistic** – he always expects the worst to happen while she looks on the bright side.
 It is strange that one of the twins is so **extroverted** while the other is so **introverted** – Ben loves being the focus of attention while Bill would far rather be alone with his thoughts.
 I feel very **tense** (or **wound-up** / **stressed-out****) after a very busy day at work but, after a hot bath and a nice cup of tea, I'll soon feel **relaxed**.
 Jane is very **sensible** – she'd never do anything stupid. In other words, she's very practical and **down-to-earth**.
 Rupert is very **sensitive** – he gets very **upset** (or **worked-up**, more colloquial), if he feels people are criticising him.

C Attitude 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 laid-back**
 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 | → stingy mean tight-fisted miserly* |
| self-assured/confident | → self-important arrogant full of oneself** |
| unconventional/original | → eccentric odd peculiar weird** |
| frank/direct/open | → blunt abrupt brusque curt |
| broad-minded | → unprincipled permissive |
| inquiring* | → inquisitive nosy** |
| generous | → extravagant |
| innocent | → naive |
| ambitious | → pushy** |
| assertive | → aggressive bossy** |

* These words are much more common in written than in spoken English.

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(See also Units 11, 12, and 82).

Exercises

38.1 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 |

38.2 Do you think that the speaker likes or dislikes the people in these sentences?

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

38.3 Reword the sentences in 38.2 to give the opposite impression (negative rather than positive or vice versa).

EXAMPLE Di's very stingy.

38.4 Magazines often publish questionnaires which are supposed to analyse aspects of your character. Look at the words below and then match them to the corresponding question.

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 | |



- 1 Do you prefer to be in the company of other people?
- 2 Look at the picture. Do you think 'my glass is half empty'?
- 3 Do you find it easy to tell your boss if you feel he or she has treated you badly?
- 4 Do you always look out of the window if you hear a car draw up?
- 5 Do you often buy your friends presents for no particular reason?
- 6 Do you frequently disagree with what other people say?
- 7 Do you lie awake at night if someone has said something unkind to you?

38.5 What questions like those in 38.4 could you ask to find out if a person is the following:

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 thrifty | 3 sensible | 5 even-tempered | 7 obstinate |
| 2 blunt | 4 intelligent | 6 original | 8 stressed-out |

38.6 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.

38.7 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.