

Teacher's notes – Describing people (Intermediate)

Aim

The aim of these vocabulary activities is to introduce between ten and twenty useful vocabulary items for the level, with an emphasis on checking the meaning and using the words and phrases. The students should be able to use the language actively once they have completed the tasks.

The tasks are designed to help students match words to meaning, and to use and personalise vocabulary. However, it is always a good idea to think about which words your students will find difficult. If you have a monolingual class it is easy to predict this, and think of check questions to make sure they understand the words.

1 At this level it is a good idea to find visuals to help teach these words. You could bring in pictures from magazines of different people. Ask the students to describe the pictures, eliciting descriptive words and phrases.

Put the students in pairs to match the adjectives to their opposite.

Answers

tall	⇒	short	ugly	⇒	beautiful
weak	⇒	strong	old	⇒	young
big	⇒	small	fat	⇒	thin

2 Put the students in pairs to match the adjectives B to the adjectives in A. They should match by deciding how close the words are in meaning.

Answers

overweight	⇒	fat	good-looking	⇒	beautiful
elderly	⇒	old	slim	⇒	thin
middle-aged	⇒	old/young	of medium height	⇒	tall/short
chubby	⇒	fat	skinny	⇒	thin
muscular	⇒	strong	attractive	⇒	beautiful
handsome	⇒	beautiful	gorgeous	⇒	beautiful
well-built	⇒	strong (fat)	plain	⇒	ugly/beautiful
petite	⇒	small/thin			

A negative, critical meaning: *Skinny* (perhaps *plain*)

The words that can particularly be used to describe:

- a. a man = handsome is almost always only used with men. All the other words can be used to describe men except petite and plain (rare to describe a man as beautiful)
- b. a woman = petite and plain are only used with women. All the other words can be used to describe women (rare to describe a woman as handsome or well-built)
- c. a person over 50 = middle-aged
- d. a person over 70 = elderly
- e. a bodybuilder = well-built, muscular
- f. a supermodel = good-looking, attractive, gorgeous, slim, skinny
- g. you = students' own ideas

3 Ask the students to put the adverbs in order from the weakest to the strongest.

Answers

not very ⇒ quite ⇒ fairly ⇒ very ⇒ really ⇒ extremely ⇒ absolutely

Put the students in pairs to match an adverb from the list to one of the adjectives in exercises 1 and 2, then write a sentence to rephrase the sentences. Read through the example. It is important that they note that not all of the adverbs collocate with all of the adjectives.

Suggested answers

- 1 She's absolutely gorgeous.
- 2 He's extremely muscular/strong/well-built.
- 3 She's very skinny.
- 4 I'm quite/fairly chubby.
- 5 Frank is very handsome.

Note that *absolutely* only goes with *gorgeous*. This is because we only use *absolutely* with very strong, extreme adjectives. You could give students other examples. For example, *very big*, *absolutely enormous*.

4 Ask the students to match the parts of the face with the list of adjectives that can be used to describe them.

Answers

ears	⇒	big	cauliflower	sticky-out
nose	⇒	big	snub	pointed
eyes	⇒	big	bright	blue
lips	⇒	thin	full	sexy

5 Ask the students to read the advertisement from a Hollywood magazine and answer the question.

Answer

They are looking for the lead actor for the movie, *Superman XII*.

Ask the students to write a short advertisement, seeking lead actors or actresses for one of the movies in the list. Monitor and help with ideas and vocabulary. Pass the advertisements around for the other students to read.

6 Give the students a few minutes to prepare to describe people in their family. When they are ready, put the students in pairs or small groups to ask and answer questions. You may need to check that they know the structure, *What does he/she look like?*