

# Language for ...

## hair

**Age:** Adult

**Level:** Intermediate

**Time:** 45–60 minutes

**Language Focus:** vocabulary for describing hair

**Skills:** listening, speaking, reading

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student, audio file (on onestopenglish or downloaded in advance of the lesson)

**Aims:** to provide students with language for describing hair and getting a haircut



### What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red, and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

- 1 As preparation for the lesson, ask students to find a picture of a famous person they admire, make a note of adjectives that describe their hair and, if appropriate, find the correct word for their hairstyle, using a dictionary to check any vocabulary if necessary.



**Teaching tip:** Students could be invited to share their pictures on a class blog/website. Ask them to submit a photo and a word bank so that as a class they create a 'gallery' of favourite celebrities and related hair vocabulary. Encourage them to look back at this before the lesson, commenting on the photos if they wish, as it will form a resource for later work in class.

- 2 Give out worksheets. Start the lesson by asking students to read the statement and elicit answers (i.e. a *bad hair day* is a day when your hair looks untidy and you feel unattractive). Is there an equivalent expression in the students' own language(s)? Giving vocabulary pointers if necessary (e.g. *messy, crumpled, tangled, stick up/out*), ask them to chat for a minute in groups of two or three about any of their own experiences of a time when they weren't happy with their hair. You may wish to remind them that the word *hair* is uncountable when it describes what grows on our heads, so *My hair/It* + singular form of verb (not *My hairs/They* ...).
- 3 Explain to students that they are now going to listen to eight short descriptions of different people's hair. Ask them to listen carefully and identify the correct photo for each description. Give them a few seconds to look at the photos before you play the recording, and play it a second time so that they can check their work. Check answers as a class.
- 4 Exercise 2b focuses on vocabulary commonly used in descriptions of hair, some of which students may have found in preparation for the lesson. Ask them to complete it in pairs, permitting them to use the Macmillan Dictionary if necessary. Check answers as a class. If necessary explain that, when describing hair, *dark* means brown or black in colour. Point out that although *red* is often used to describe orange-brown (*ginger*) hair, *yellow* is rarely used in place of *blonde*.

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 **Teaching tip:** More vocabulary related to hair colour/condition can be found in the Macmillan Dictionary thesaurus at:

[www.macmillandictionary.com/thesaurus-category/british/hair-colour](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/thesaurus-category/british/hair-colour)

[www.macmillandictionary.com/thesaurus-category/british/words-used-to-describe-the-state-of-people-s-hair](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/thesaurus-category/british/words-used-to-describe-the-state-of-people-s-hair)

If students have mobile phones, tell them to find a partner and each take a 'selfie'. Looking at the photos, they should then write a short description of first their own hair, and then their partner's. Does their partner's description match their own?

- 5 Exercise 3a highlights some vocabulary often encountered at a hairdresser's. Ask students to work in pairs, encouraging them to first complete any answers they immediately know so that they can be eliminated. Check the answers as a class. Point out that the words *fringe* and *parting* are mainly used in British English and their US counterparts are *bangs* (a plural noun, so e.g. *My fringe is long* but *My bangs are long*) and *part* respectively. In British English, the expression *short back and sides* is sometimes used to describe a male haircut similar to a *crew cut*.
- 6 Exercise 3b simulates a typical conversation in a hairdresser's. Give students time to read it, and then check the answer as a class. Ensure that students understand that whilst a barber's only cuts men's hair, a hairdresser's deals with both men and women. A (*hair/hairdressing*) *salon* is an alternative term for a hairdresser's. You might also wish to explain *split ends* = hair that has divided into several parts at its end and looks messy.
- 7 Tell students to complete exercise 3c, reminding them to look at the replies or other information surrounding the question gaps in the text. Check answers and, if time permits, re-read the conversation as a class, inviting students to play the roles. Point out use of the phrasal verb *take [an amount] off*, which is almost always heard in this context rather than, for example, *remove* or *cut off*. Note also that in the UK the amount of hair to be cut is still usually described in inches rather than centimetres.
- 8 Tell students to find a partner and spend a couple of minutes noting down ideas for exercise 4. Remind them that for help they can also look at the conversation text, vocabulary from earlier exercise material (including the Macmillan Dictionary thesaurus as referenced in the previous Teacher's tip box) and their lesson preparation.
- 9 As a wind-up activity, split students into groups to discuss the idioms in exercise 5. Do not allow them to use a dictionary, but to speculate about their meaning if they aren't sure. Choose one of the groups to report back to the class, allowing other groups to contribute if any answers are wrong. As a class, brainstorm ideas for sentences illustrating the use of the idioms, e.g. *I've been tearing my hair out trying to write this essay*; *It's a place where you can really let your hair down and have fun*; *She looked beautiful as always, not a hair out of place*.

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### KEY:

**1** *bad hair day* = a day when your hair looks untidy and you do not feel attractive

- 2a**
- 1 F
  - 2 G
  - 3 A
  - 4 E
  - 5 B
  - 6 H
  - 7 D
  - 8 C

### 2b

Colour: auburn, blonde, brunette, dark, fair, ginger, mousy, red

Condition: bushy, curly, dry, fine, frizzy, greasy, lank, shiny, straight, thick, wavy

**2c** students' own answers

- 3a**
- 1 e
  - 2 d
  - 3 f
  - 4 h
  - 5 a
  - 6 g
  - 7 c
  - 8 b

**3b** a hairdresser's

- 3c**
- 1 D
  - 2 E
  - 3 B
  - 4 A
  - 5 F
  - 6 C

**4** students' own answers

**5** *tear your hair out* = to feel very worried/stressed about something

*let your hair down* = to relax and enjoy yourself without worrying about anything

*not a hair out of place* = very tidy and clean

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- A** This person has Afro hair. It is thick, black and curly.
- B** This person has no hair. They are bald.
- C** This person has thick, blonde, curly hair.
- D** This person has long, black dreadlocks.
- E** This person has fine, light-brown hair.
- F** This person has grey hair and a fringe.
- G** This person has long, straight red hair.
- H** This person has thick, wavy, brown hair.

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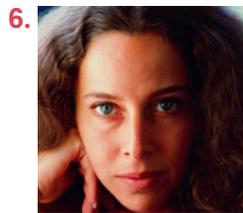
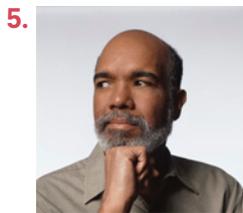
### 1 Warmer

Read the following text message. What is a 'bad hair day'? Has this ever happened to you?

I'm having a bad hair day! Last night I fell asleep when it was wet :(

### 2 Audio

a Listen to the descriptions of hair (A-H) and match them with the pictures (1-8).



b Do the words in the box describe the colour or type/condition of hair? Complete the table.

auburn	blonde	brunette	bushy	curly	dark	frizzy	ginger
dry	fair	fine	greasy	lank	mousy	shiny	straight
		red	thick	wavy			

colour	type/condition

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### 3 Language in use

**a Match the two parts of the definitions.**

1. A trim is
2. Highlights are
3. A parting
4. To blow-dry
5. A fringe is short
6. Layered hair
7. A crew cut
8. A perm is

- a. hair that hangs down over your forehead.
- b. a chemical hair treatment that makes straight hair curly.
- c. is a very short hairstyle for men.
- d. pieces of hair that are a lighter colour than the rest.
- e. the action of cutting off a small amount of hair so that it looks tidy.
- f. is a line on your head that you make by brushing your hair in two different directions.
- g. is cut so that the top pieces are shorter than the hair underneath.
- h. is to dry your hair with a hairdryer.

**b Read the conversation below, ignoring the gaps for now. Do you think it takes place in a hairdresser's or a barber's?**



- Kira:** Oh, hi. I'm looking to get my hair cut. (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- Stylist:** OK right, er . . . Let me see . . . Yes, Eva should be free in about 15 minutes. She's just doing a perm for Mrs Reeves. Do you mind waiting?
- Kira:** Of course, that's fine, thanks.
- Stylist:** If you'd just like to take a seat over there. (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- Kira:** Ooh, that would be nice, thanks very much. Black, and no sugar if that's OK.
- Stylist:** No problem. I'll get that sorted for you.
- ...

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- Eva:** Hi Kira, would you like to come over now?  
**Kira:** [sitting in chair] Thanks.  
**Eva:** So, (3) \_\_\_\_\_ A cut and blow dry?  
**Kira:** Well, actually I'd just like a trim, if that's OK.  
**Eva:** Sure. (4) \_\_\_\_\_ About an inch?  
**Kira:** [hesitating] I'm not sure. Er, if you could get rid of these split ends . . .  
**Eva:** How about if I tidy up your fringe and take half an inch off the back?  
**Kira:** That sounds great, thanks.  
 . . .  
**Eva:** Your hair is still a bit wet (5) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Kira:** No thanks, it'll be fine.  
**Eva:** OK, I'll just grab another mirror. [showing Kira] (6) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Kira:** It looks perfect, thank you.  
**Eva:** You're welcome. Just pay at the counter on your way out.  
**Kira:** Right - and thanks again. Bye now!

**c** Read the conversation again and complete it with the questions A-F below.

- A How much do you want me to take off?
- B What can I do for you today?
- C Does that look OK for you?
- D Is there anyone available in the next hour?
- E Can I get you a coffee?
- F Would you like me to dry it for you?

### 4 Communicate

Complete the task in pairs. Look at the pictures below or use your own ideas.



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Student A

Choose a picture from this worksheet and imagine you want to have that hairstyle.

Your partner will be the hairdresser. Explain how you want your hair to look and answer their questions.

Student B

You are a hairdresser. Listen to what your partner tells you and imagine you are going to cut their hair.

Ask them questions as necessary.

*I want about an inch off the top/back.*

*Can you layer/colour my hair?*

*I'd like some highlights / a perm.*

*What are we doing for you today?*

*How much would you like me to take off?*

*Do you want a fringe?*

## 5 Discuss

### Hair metaphors



English has several fixed phrases based on the idea of hair. Look at the three examples below, and discuss what they mean and when you might use them.

- tear your hair out
- let your hair down
- not a hair out of place

### Red Words

blonde\* curly\* dark\*\*\* fringe\* fair\*\*\* hairstyle\* fine\*\*\* trim\* straight\*\* thick\*\*\*