

Describing people's appearance

A General descriptions

Positive: beautiful is generally used to describe women; handsome is used to describe men; good-looking and attractive are used for both. Pretty is another positive word to describe a woman (often a girl), meaning 'attractive and nice to look at'.
Negative: ugly is a very negative word; plain is negative but more polite.

B Height and build



tall and slim



medium height and build



medium height and very muscular



short and fat

Another word for slim is **thin**, but with a more negative meaning, e.g. John is lovely and slim, but his brother is very thin. It is not very polite to say someone is fat; overweight is a bit less rude.

C Hair



blond(e) fair brown dark black



straight wavy curly hair

D Special features

The man on the left has very pale skin (= light skin). He also has broad shoulders, with a scar on his forehead. The other man has dark skin. He also has a beard and moustache.



E Asking questions about a person's appearance

Q: What does she look like? A: She's tallish, with short fair hair.
 Q: How tall is she? A: About 1 metre 65.
 Q: How much does she weigh? A: I don't know - roughly 50 kilos, I guess.

We can use **about** and **roughly** to mean 'more or less' when talking about height (= how tall someone is), weight (= how heavy is someone) or age. The suffix '-ish' can be used at the end of some adjectives to mean 'quite' and at the end of some numbers to mean 'more or less'.

She's got longish hair. He's twentyish. She's roughly 40.

Exercises

48.1 Complete these sentences in a suitable way. (More than one answer may be possible.)

- 1 He's got very muscular ...arms.....
- 2 She's got blonde
- 3 He's got very pale
- 4 They've both got curly
- 5 I would say he was medium
- 6 Her brother has got very broad
- 7 Last time I saw him he had grown a beard and
- 8 Both men were very good-

48.2 Replace the underlined word with a word which is more suitable or more polite.

- 1 He told me he met a handsome girl in the disco last night. beautiful
- 2 She's beautiful but her younger sister is really quite ugly.
- 3 I think Peter is getting a bit fat, don't you?
- 4 I think she's hoping to meet a few beautiful men at the tennis club.
- 5 Paul is very thin.

48.3 You want to know about the following: someone's general appearance; their height; their weight. What do you need to ask? Complete these questions.

- 1 What
- 2 How
- 3 How much

48.4 Make these sentences less exact. Do it in a different way each time.

- 1 She's 20. She's 20, more or less.
- 2 I'm 75 kilos.
- 3 She's 1 metre 70.
- 4 They're both 30.

48.5 Now answer these questions.

- 1 How tall are you?
- 2 How would you describe your build?
- 3 How much do you weigh?
- 4 What kind of hair have you got?
- 5 What colour is it?
- 6 Would you like it to be different? If so, what else would you like to change about your appearance?
- 7 Do you think you have any special features?
- 8 Are there any special features you would like to have?
- 9 Do you like beards?
- 10 Can you think of a famous woman you would describe as beautiful, and a famous man you would describe as good-looking?

If possible, ask another person these questions.