

Lesson 1 – Vocabulary: Personality & Behavior

Let's begin by learning some more advanced words we can use to describe someone's personality and behavior.

Of course there are hundreds and hundreds of these, but today we'll just focus on some interesting positive and negative personality words. These will give you more options for describing someone, in more nuanced ways that have extra layers of meaning.

We'll start with words that have a positive meaning or connotation.

You can describe someone as **assertive** if they often take initiative, they are bold and confident in putting forward their ideas. Assertive people are often **outspoken**. This word means are not shy or reserved about stating their honest opinions.



Someone who is **charismatic** is a type of person who naturally attracts others through their warm, friendly, almost hypnotizing personality. People tend to be drawn to a charismatic person. You can also say a person has a lot of **charisma** (noun) to describe this quality.



Describing someone as **cultured** means they are educated, refined, and have good manners and social skills. This type of person would also be **courteous**, meaning they are polite and show consideration towards others, like by opening the door for someone or letting someone else go first.

When someone has a lot of knowledge and appreciation of a particular area – especially when it comes to food and the arts – you can say that person is a **connoisseur** of that area. For example, she’s a **connoisseur** of fine wines if she knows a lot about them and is able to distinguish them and make good recommendations.



To talk about being calm – especially in the face of stressful circumstances – you can say the person is **composed**. Some people can remain composed even when the situation is crazy. But others might be outwardly composed (meaning they appear to be calm) but internally they are agitated.



Someone who ALWAYS stays calm and is not upset or shaken even by very intense situations can be described as **unflappable** – like nothing can make them lose their calm or lose their composure.

A **conscientious** person is someone who is careful and accurate with details. They don't make careless mistakes because they check and think about things carefully. And someone who is **judicious** makes good judgments. They are intelligent and practical, so they can make good decisions.

Describing someone as **feisty** means they are full of life and have a lot of energy, an animated personality. And someone who is **witty** is clever and funny with words; they often make people smile/laugh with their speaking or writing.



Now let's look at some negative personality words.

Someone who is **callous** has a "hard heart" or appears to have no emotions or no feelings for others. A callous person would not care if other people were hurt.

There are a lot of ways to describe someone who thinks they are better than others. You could call them **conceited**, **cocky** (informal), **pompous**, or **condescending**.

Someone who is especially annoying, or their behavior, can be described as **obnoxious**. It really bothers and irritates you.

One obnoxious type of person is one who is **meddlesome** or **nosy** – this is a person who wants to know about or interfere in other people's private affairs.



Another annoying personality trait is being **tactless**, meaning someone who does not have manners and often says or does things that offend other people or hurt their feelings.

Speaking of feelings, a person who is **moody** or **temperamental** is one whose emotions change very frequently, and it's impossible to predict whether they'll be excited or depressed.

Someone who easily gets irritated or impatient can be described as **testy**. You have to be careful because even little things can annoy or anger them.



A **cynical** person tends to have a negative perspective and believe the worst about everything and everyone – they think most people are selfish and most ideas will fail, so they tend to criticize.

Finally, someone who is **slovenly** or a **slob** is habitually messy in their appearance or in their home; they don't have good hygiene/dress or they don't clean up.



Now you know 21 great words for describing people! Go ahead and try the quiz to put these words into practice and make sure you understand when each one is used.

Review & Practice Pronunciation:

assertive (adj.)	takes initiative; bold and confident in putting forward ideas
outspoken (adj.)	not shy or reserved about stating opinions
charismatic (adj.) charisma (n.)	naturally attracts others through warm, friendly personality
cultured (adj.)	educated, refined, with good manners and social skills
courteous (adj.)	polite and show consideration towards others
connoisseur (n.)	has a lot of knowledge and appreciation of a particular area
composed (adj.)	stays calm in the face of stressful circumstances
unflappable (adj.)	always calm, like nothing can make them upset or agitated
conscientious (adj.)	careful and accurate with details
judicious (adj.)	makes good judgments
feisty (adj.)	full of life with an animated personality
witty (adj.)	clever and funny with words
callous (adj.)	appears to have no emotions or feelings for others
conceited, cocky, pompous, condescending (adj.)	arrogant, think they are better than others
obnoxious (adj.)	especially annoying
meddlesome/nosy (adj.)	wants to know about or interfere in other people's private affairs
tactless (adj.)	has no manners
moody/temperamental (adj.)	emotions change very frequently and unpredictably
testy (adj.)	easily gets irritated or impatient
cynical (adj.)	has a negative perspective and believes the worst
slovenly (adj.) a slob (n.)	habitually messy in appearance or environment

Quiz – Lesson 1

Complete each sentence with a word from the box.

assertive	condescending	cynical	outspoken
callous	connoisseur	feisty	slob
charismatic	conscientious	nosy	temperamental
composed	courteous	obnoxious	testy

1. He ended a 5-year relationship by breaking up with his girlfriend via text message. How could he be so _____?!
2. I can't stand it when my coworkers eat crunchy snacks at their desks - the sound is so _____.
3. The congregation of that church is growing fast because the pastor is so _____.
4. I tend to get _____ and lose my temper easily when I'm stressed out.
5. I'm teaching my kids to be _____ and let others go first.
6. It's rude to ask people when they're planning on having children - that's really _____.
7. My cousin has been acting super _____ ever since she got into that elite college.
8. He's so _____; he always focuses on something bad, even in the best situation.
9. She's very _____ about the issue of animal rights; she frequently brings it up during interviews.

10. The _____ student checked over her work three times before handing it in.
11. I'm a _____ of classical music; I've been studying it my whole life.
12. The manager is really _____ and you never know whether he's having a good day or a bad day.
13. Ugh, please throw away that half-eaten food from yesterday - you're such a _____!
14. We're looking for an intern who is _____ enough to identify problems and propose solutions.
15. I have a hard time staying _____ when an angry customer is yelling at me.
16. My grandmother was quite _____; she was always the life of the party.

Writing Exercises – Lesson 1

Write 1-3 full sentences for each question, and send your answers to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback!

1. Do you consider being assertive and outspoken a positive or a negative quality?
2. Describe someone you know who is charismatic.
3. Talk about a time when you were very conscientious.
4. Write about a situation when you had to stay composed.

5. Describe someone you know who is feisty or witty.
6. What's a condescending remark you've heard someone say?
7. What are some things you find obnoxious?
8. What would you do if your coworker was very nosy?
9. Do you think people in general are more cynical nowadays than in the past?
10. What's an example of slovenly behavior you've seen (or done yourself)?

Quiz Answers – Lesson 1

1. callous
2. obnoxious
3. charismatic
4. testy
5. courteous
6. nosy
7. condescending
8. cynical
9. outspoken
10. conscientious
11. connoisseur
12. temperamental
13. slob
14. assertive
15. composed
16. feisty