



Colloquial English / Level 2

Unit 9 - *Describing Appearance*



About this eBook

This eBook goes together with the audio that you can download from Zappenglish.com. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please visit our website – we always value your opinion. Good luck! Katie & Tom



Introduction

In this unit you're going to learn colloquial words and expressions for talking about what people look like. Remember, you need to be careful with colloquial expressions because not all of them are polite. If you're not sure – check! OK let's start!

Colloquial Expressions Task 1

KATIE: Hello Clare.

CLARE: Hi Katie.

KATIE: Erm...we're going to, talk about describing appearance.

CLARE: Superb.

KATIE: And I'm going to describe some colloquial expressions, some informal, words and phrases to you, and you're going to guess them.

CLARE: OK.

KATIE: And, the reason that I want to ask you about this, topic, describing appearance...(laughter)...is that, just a few minutes ago...erm...we were talking about this actually weren't we?

CLARE: Yes we were.

KATIE: And you...you used one of the words that's on my list.

CLARE: Did I?

KATIE: You did.

CLARE: Oooh.

KATIE: And it means...it's a way to describe somebody that you think is really physically attractive. *Oh, he's...*

CLARE: **Hot!** (laughter)

KATIE: Yes.

CLARE: (laughter)

KATIE: Exactly. **Hot.**



CLARE: Yes. Yeah we say this a lot. (laughter)

KATIE: So you can use it to describe, a man.

CLARE: Yeah.

KATIE: Could...could men use it to describe women?

CLARE: Yeah yeah, also. Yeah definitely. Erm...I....I think it's exactly that, it's somebody that, physically is really really attractive, is really, how you say, *Ooof! Wow they're really hot!* Yeah yeah...

KATIE: It's like...(noise)

CLARE: Exactly, it's exactly that. Er yeah, this is the most common way that I...I talk about somebody that's physically attractive. It's...a very very usual thing.

KATIE: So **hot**, now...there's another one...

CLARE: Ooph! Ahh. I'm just thinking about **hot** men, this is a really nice topic!

KATIE: (laughter) OK well, continuing on that topic, you'll be happy to know...

CLARE: OK.

KATIE: ...there's another word which is very British English.

CLARE: OK.

KATIE: And...I'm not sure if I like this word or not...

CLARE: OK.

KATIE: Erm, it means the same thing as **hot**. And usually, you would use it to describe food.

CLARE: **Tasty**.

KATIE: Yes.

CLARE: Oh yeah. I'm the same, I don't like that at all. Erm...

KATIE: Yeah it's I...I'm...I don't know why I've put it in the list of words to guess because I don't really like it, but it means **hot** doesn't it?

CLARE: Yeah it does. It does...erm...er, yeah you're right...er...I...I agree with you it's not a word that, I really like. I wouldn't particularly like to be described as **tasty**. Because you're right I...I think about it as food, that it's...related to, flavours, and...er...so yeah it's a little bit strange.

KATIE: Yeah.



CLARE: Erm, but yeah it is very very British English.

KATIE: Yes. So I wouldn't...I wouldn't recommend people use this one but you may hear it.

CLARE: Yes exactly.

KATIE: OK. A couple more, that are also about somebody who's physically attractive.

CLARE: Excellent. I think I'm good at these ones. (laughter)

KATIE: Erm...this one is usually er...used to describe a guy, who's...erm, who's **hot**. Er because...er maybe he's strong looking, he's muscular. You might say, *Ooh he's really...*

CLARE: Fit. No? OK.

KATIE: That is one, yes. But it's not the one I'm thinking of. Begins with *h*. H...**Hunk**.

CLARE: Ah that's not what I was thinking.

KATIE: **Hunky**.

CLARE: Ah, OK. Oh **hunky**. (laughter)

KATIE: Yeah. He's a **hunk**. (laughter) He's **hunky**. (laughter) Like I have friends who, would describe Brad Pitt as **hunky**. So if er...for example you had...not you...well, I don't know, maybe you...but if there was a calendar of, you know...fit guys with big muscles, showing their chest, you know on...a...a picture in January, February, March, it might be called, you know...a calendar full of **hunks**.

CLARE: Yeah yeah.

KATIE: **Hunky** men.

CLARE: Exactly yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah I...I would buy the calendar...(laughter)

KATIE: So we've had **hot**, **tasty** and **hunky**, as positive ones. Now um...a couple of...er negative ones. Erm...well. The next one is...it's maybe more of a fun way to say something. Erm...and it means maybe a little bit, fat. A little bit. A little bit over weight. (laughter) Er, and it sounds like...**hunky**.

CLARE: **Chunky**.

KATIE: Yes.

CLARE: I think we have a...er a few words to describe this kind of er...er...

KATIE: Yeah.

CLARE: ...person, but yeah **chunky** is...is one of them...



KATIE: Yeah.

CLARE: ...and...I think...yeah I think we use it because, it's a bit more acceptable than to say, *Oh, he's a bit...fat.*

KATIE: Yes.

CLARE: Oh, *He's a bit chunky.*

KATIE: Yes.

CLARE: It's...erm, so I think it's...it's a nicer way to...to explain what you mean. So I think it's quite a nice one really.

KATIE: Yeah, **chunky**. I use this one when I'm talking about myself. *I've got to go on a diet, I'm getting a bit chunky.*

CLARE: (laughter) I think it's a...I think it's a nice word. Um...it's not as...it's quite uncomfortable to...to use *fat*...

KATIE: Yeah.

CLARE: ...I think, especially if you're talking about yourself. So I think **chunky**'s a...a good word.

KATIE: It's a little bit funny. OK and the last one. Erm, again, not so nice, but not terrible. Erm, and it's used to describe a woman...who...is not beautiful. It doesn't mean *ugly*, but it just means, you know, *usual looking*.

CLARE: **Plain.**

KATIE: Yes. **Plain.**

CLARE: Mmm.

KATIE: OK. And we can also extend that into a **plain**...

CLARE: **Jane.**

KATIE: Yes! So **plain**, is kind of a...again a less strong word than...it doesn't mean *ugly* does it? It just means...

CLARE: No just average. N...

KATIE: Yeah.

CLARE: Somebody that has nothing...particular about them. Just very very usual, very normal.

KATIE: Yeah and...

CLARE: Yeah I think it's that.



KATIE: So a **plain Jane**...

CLARE: Yes exactly.

KATIE: ...would just be sort of...not...brilliant looking, but not terrible.

CLARE: Exactly.

KATIE: Well...let's have a rest now. You can go and, see if you can find any...**hunky...hunky...hot...**

CLARE: But we didn't...

KATIE: ...**hunks**.

CLARE: We didn't have *sexy*.

KATIE: True yes.

CLARE: What happened? (laughter)

Meaning and Pronunciation Task 1

How many of those can you remember? It's time to find out. Answer my questions and repeat after the beep.

We had two phrases that people might use if they think a person is very attractive, good-looking or sexy. Can you remember the one which has the same word we use for weather?

hot

hot He thinks she's **hot**.

The other one is a very colloquial expression and it's a very British English way to say the same thing.

tasty

tasty She thought he was **tasty**.

This one is an adjective and it means *a bit overweight*. This person might be a little bit fat. This is a bit of a funny way to say it, but be careful it's still not polite.



chunky

chunky He's getting a bit **chunky**. He needs to go on a diet.

The next word sounds very similar to **chunky** but this one means attractive and with a lot of muscles. It's used to describe a man.

hunky

hunky She says he's really **hunky**.

We also have a noun.

a **hunk** He's a real **hunk**.

This one isn't so nice. It's used to describe a woman who someone thinks is rather ordinary looking, just average.

a **plain Jane**

a **plain Jane** a **plain Jane**

Colloquial Expressions Task 2

KATIE: Hiya Tom.

TOM: Hello.

KATIE: We are at your house, in your room.

TOM: Yeah.

KATIE: And I'm going to, describe some, informal words and expressions and you're going to guess them. Aren't you?

TOM: I'm going to try.

KATIE: (laughter) OK. So all of the words or expressions in this podcast, are ways to describe people, informal ways to describe people. OK.

TOM: Yeah.

KATIE: What they look like. So...we are, sitting on your bed at the moment.



TOM: Yep.

KATIE: Now when you get up in the morning...out of your bed...How is your hair? Tidy, untidy?

TOM: Untidy. Always.

KATIE: OK. And there is a word...to describe, when somebody has...(mmm). Their hair looks like they just got out of bed.

TOM: I can't remember this, is it bed hair? No.

KATIE: Bed head.

TOM: **Bed head. Bed head.**

KATIE: So I might say, *Brush your hair you've got **bed head**.*

TOM: Yeah.

KATIE: Actually you do look like you've got **bed head** at the moment. Why is it all over the place?

TOM: I don't know...maybe that's because of the headphones.

KATIE: Oh maybe yeah. Thomas has got **bed head**, but not because he just got up.

TOM: No...

KATIE: And in fact, you can...you can get a hair product, you know like the stuff you put in your hair?

TOM: Yeah...

KATIE: ...to make it...

TOM: ...gel.

KATIE: Yeah, gel or mousse or whatever, I'm sure there's one called **bed head**.

TOM: To make you look like you just got out of bed?

KATIE: Yeah, because it's very fashionable to look, erm...messy, to have messy hair, so...

TOM: Yes. That's for the young people.

KATIE: (laughter) Oh dear.

TOM: I used to have hair like that.

KATIE: Mmm hmm. OK, well, now, this might be a time to talk about...erm...what happens...er...when you get older, to your hair?



TOM: It falls out.

KATIE: (laughter) Yes.

TOM: (laughter) Or it goes grey.

KATIE: Yeah, I'm thinking of the first one, it falls out. Erm...so...

TOM: No comments about my hair now.

KATIE: (laughter) You've got lovely hair.

TOM: Thank you.

KATIE: Erm, but...when somebody's hair does fall out and they start to go bald...

TOM: Yeah.

KATIE: OK, no hair on top, we...or...it's going...it's...they're losing their hair...

TOM: Hmm.

KATIE: ...we say they are...getting a bit...thin...

TOM: **Thin on top.**

KATIE: Yes.

TOM: I was thinking of *egghead*.

KATIE: (laughter) That, now OK... egghead is a good one, but egghead is...well, it's not very nice...

TOM: No.

KATIE: ...but it means that someone is...

TOM: ...totally bald.

KATIE: Yeah. They've got an...a head like an egg.

TOM: Shiny.

KATIE: Yeah. But if they've still got some hair, but it's going, we can say they are going a bit...

TOM: ...**thin on top.**

KATIE: Yeah, or they are, **thin on top**. OK. So that was, two expressions about hair. Now then, erm...the next two are about...the size and shape, of a person's body.

TOM: OK.



KATIE: If someone is really thin, like too thin...we could describe them as all...skin...

TOM: All skin and bone.

KATIE: Yeah. Yeah. So for example, I'm on a diet now, aren't I Thomas, trying to lose weight?

TOM: Yes.

KATIE: And if I am not careful, I'll get so thin, that you will say, *Oh you need to eat more chocolate, you're **all skin and bone**.*

TOM: Yeah...Yes.

KATIE: He doesn't...he doesn't believe that that's true.

TOM: Yes I think...I think...yes...I...I can't say, I don't think that you'll reach **all skin and bone**.

KATIE: No I don't.

TOM: And I don't think I will either. And I'm also on a diet.

KATIE: But actually we don't want to be **all skin and bone**, because, **all skin and bone** is too thin.

TOM: Yes. It's unhealthy.

KATIE: Yeah. OK. And the other one, is a bit of a negative way, to talk about...usually to talk about a guy. A male. A man. Who, is a bit thin and doesn't have any muscles.

TOM: Er...it's an adjective or...

KATIE: It's an adjective yeah.

TOM: He's a bit **weedy**.

KATIE: Yes.

TOM: **Weedy**.

KATIE: **Weedy**. Yeah. So...a **weedy** guy...probably doesn't go to the gym and lift big weights.

TOM: Yeah. He's...he doesn't look strong.

KATIE: No.

TOM: He isn't strong.

KATIE: Exactly, yeah. So he's a bit **weedy**.

TOM: Yeah.

KATIE: Not nice. Don't use that one.



TOM: No.

KATIE: OK. And the last one...is about your general appearance. And if you don't look tidy, maybe you have **bed head**, and your clothes are, a bit old looking...erm...What can we say? You are...s...cr...

TOM: **Scruffy!**

KATIE: Yes.

TOM: **Scruffy.**

KATIE: **Scruffy.** My brother has a dog called **Scruffy**. (laughter) Because it's got hair that looks...

TOM: It's a good name for a dog.

KATIE: ...like a mess.

TOM: **Scruffy.**

KATIE: Mmm. Erm, but we can also call a person **scruffy**.

TOM: Yeah. In fact, it's the kind of thing my grandparents used to say to me when I was an...adolescent, all the time. *Why are you so scruffy?*

KATIE: Yeah. (laughter)

TOM: You know, when it was fashionable to have...to look **scruffy**.

KATIE: Yeah. I think it is still.

TOM: Yeah. I like looking **scruffy** sometimes.

KATIE: Well I don't like looking **scruffy** but...for some reason...I always do look **scruffy**. I never look tidy. Unless I'm going to a job interview or something like that. And I've...you know...put...really new tidy clothes on and really brushed my hair.

TOM: Yeah, that's about once every ten years though isn't it?

KATIE: Yes exactly so, most of my life I look **scruffy**.

TOM: Yeah me too.

KATIE: But **scruffy's** comfortable.



Meaning and Pronunciation Task 2

Answer my questions and repeat after the beep – it's time to check your memory.

Which adjective means the opposite to *smart* when we're talking about appearance? Maybe somebody's clothes are a bit old or dirty, or they haven't brushed their hair.

scruffy

scruffy He looks a bit **scruffy**.

The next phrase is used to describe a man who's going bald. He doesn't have a lot of hair on his head.

thin on top

thin on top He's going a bit **thin on top**.

What very informal adjective can we use to mean the opposite of *strong*? It's a word usually used to describe a man, who maybe isn't very big and doesn't have muscles.

weedy

weedy He's a bit **weedy** looking.

Another expression that talks about size, can be used about both men and women and means they are much too thin. They look like they need to eat more. Can you remember? Skin...

skin and bone

skin and bone She needs to put some weight on, she's **skin and bone**.

Our last phrase means that your hair is a mess. It's very untidy. In fact it looks like you just got up.

bed head

bed head He's got **bed head**.



Summary

Congratulations. You should have learned some new colloquial expressions for talking about appearance. Remember, use them carefully; some are not so polite and you don't want to upset anyone!!



Extra Materials

Glossary

1 = Informal but could be used in speech with most people and in most situations.

2 = Informal and would be best used in very informal situations with people you know well.

3 = Be very careful! Very informal and may upset or offend some people. Don't use this with your mother-in-law!!!

hot (2/3) – has a very attractive body, sexually attractive

hunky (2) – used to describe a physically attractive and strong looking man

tasty (UK) (3) – a very informal way to say *sexually attractive*, be careful with this one.

a plain Jane / plain (2) – a way to describe a woman who is not very good looking

scruffy (1) – untidy looking

thin on top (2) – going bald, losing their hair

weedy (2) – used to describe someone (usually male) who is thin and weak looking (negative)

all skin and bone (2) – very thin (negative)

bed head (1) – when your hair looks like it hasn't been brushed and as if you have just got up out of bed

chunky (2) – a funny way to say a little bit overweight



Practice Exercise 1

Match a sentence (1-6) with one that means the same (a-f).

1. He hasn't got any muscles.
2. Her hair is always untidy and her clothes need ironing.
3. He often goes to the gym and he looks really good.
4. He's a bit overweight at the moment.
5. He's going bald.
6. Have you just got up? Your hair's a mess.

- a) He's chunky.
- b) He's a bit weedy.
- c) You've got bed head.
- d) She's scruffy.
- e) He's hunky.
- f) He's thin on top.

Practice Exercise 2

The words in **bold** are in the wrong sentences; put them in the correct sentence.

1. Oh he's so hunky. I think he's really **thin on top**!
2. She's not ugly. Just a little **skin and bone** looking.
3. I need to brush my hair I've got **bed head**.
4. His head gets cold in the winter because he's a little **chunky**!
5. She needs to eat more, she's all **hot**.
6. I don't think he's very strong. He looks a bit **plain**.
7. I need to go on a diet, I'm getting a bit **weedy**.



Extra Materials - Answers

Practice Exercise 1

1. He hasn't got any muscles.
b) He's a bit weedy.
2. Her hair is always untidy and her clothes need ironing.
d) She's scruffy.
3. He often goes to the gym and he looks really good.
e) He's hunky.
4. He's a bit overweight at the moment.
a) He's chunky.
5. He's going bald.
f) He's thin on top.
6. Have you just got up? Your hair's a mess.
c) You've got bed head.

Practice Exercise 2

1. Oh he's so hunky. I think he's really **hot**!
2. She's not ugly. Just a little **plain** looking.
3. I need to brush my hair I've got **bed head**.
4. His head gets cold in the winter because he's a little **thin on top**!
5. She needs to eat more, she's all **skin and bone**.
6. I don't think he's very strong. He looks a bit **weedy**.
7. I need to go on a diet, I'm getting a bit **chunky**.

