

Culture File 33, Unit 33

Describing people 1

In English-speaking countries, you should be careful when describing people's ethnic origins and it's best to avoid doing so, if you can describe them without mentioning ethnicity. You should always avoid words for color.

If you have to describe ethnic origins, use these words:

African-American (U.S.), Afro-Caribbean (U.K.)

Oriental (U.S., U.K.)

Asian – in the U.S. this usually means from East Asia, but in the U.K. it usually means from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh)

Middle-Eastern

Hispanic (U.S.), Latin, Latin American (U.K., Latin America)

Caucasian (U.S.), Northern European (U.K.)

Mediterranean (U.S., U.K.), Southern European (U.K.)

Culture File 34, Unit 34

Describing people 2

Be careful when you describe people. Some descriptions are rude.

Look at the table:

not polite	more polite	most polite
fat	plump	well-built
skinny	thin	svelte
old	elderly	mature
short	small	petite
insane	crazy	eccentric
drunk	tipsy	tired and emotional
ugly	characterful	interesting
dumb	less intelligent	average

Culture File 35, Unit 35

Comparing things

It isn't as expensive as that one ... sounds better than *It's cheaper than that one* (because we often think of *cheap* as poor quality as well as lower price).

Sales people should be careful when making comparisons.

It's poor sales technique to criticize something the customer has already bought: *The new one is much faster and better than the one you have* because this suggests the person is wrong to have bought it.

Always point out the good points about the new product, rather than criticize the customer's choice.

Culture File 36, Unit 36

Working times

Office workers talk about a nine-to-five job, and this is still typical in both North America and the U.K. Finishing at four (or even earlier) on Friday is normal.

In the U.K., most employees get three to four weeks vacation a year. In the U.S.A., two weeks is more common (but there are more national holidays as compensation).

Factory workers begin earlier, with 8 to 4:30 being common in the U.K. In the U.S.A., a 7 a.m. start in factories is normal, and workers might have breakfast at work at 9 and finish by 3:30 p.m.

Many businesses have cafeterias for employees. Very few British or American workers go home for lunch (though in Southern Europe over 40% of workers do, but a two or three hour break at lunch times makes this possible).