

Lesson Plan: Describing personality and character in depth

Level	Intermediate / Advanced (B1–C1)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Vocabulary, writing, speaking
Focus	Nuanced personality vocabulary; hedging character descriptions; written profiles; pragmatics

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Use nuanced vocabulary to describe character with precision
- Use hedging language to qualify personality descriptions diplomatically
- Produce detailed character profiles in formal and informal writing
- Discuss psychological and personality concepts in English

TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

Nuanced positive adjectives

- perceptive, tenacious, principled, conscientious, measured, eloquent, empathetic, pragmatic

Nuanced negative adjectives

- pedantic, condescending, volatile, manipulative, complacent, obsequious, vindictive, passive-aggressive

Hedging character descriptions

- She tends to be... / He can come across as... / She's inclined to...
- He has a tendency to... / She's known for being... / At times he can be...
- She strikes me as... / He gives the impression of being...

Written profile structures

- Introducing: [Name] is widely regarded as... / [Name] is best described as...
- Developing: What sets them apart is... / A defining characteristic is...
- Qualifying: While generally... they can on occasion...

Meaning & Nuance

Word	Core meaning	Positive or negative?	Nuance
tenacious	determined, won't give up	positive	strength of will
pedantic	overly focused on details/rules	negative	annoying precision
pragmatic	practical rather than idealistic	positive/neutral	gets things done effectively
obsequious	excessively eager to please	negative	sycophantic / insincere
volatile	prone to sudden mood changes	negative	unpredictable behaviour

perceptive	quick to understand people/situations	positive	insightful, reads situations well
complacent	too satisfied, lacking drive	negative	dangerous self-satisfaction

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up: Put a name to it (10 min)

Task: Students receive a short character description and identify the vocabulary.

- 'She never gives up, even when things get very hard.' → tenacious
- *Reverse engineer the vocabulary from descriptions.*

2. Vocabulary presentation (15 min)

Task: Positive and negative nuanced adjectives in context.

- Many are formal equivalents of basic words — contrast throughout.
- Hedging phrases: important for diplomatic, fair description.

3. Character profile writing (25 min)

Task: Write a 150-word profile of someone real, fictional, or composite.

- Must use at least 5 nuanced adjectives and 2 hedging phrases.
- Peer feedback: is the description nuanced, fair, and precise?

4. Workplace discussion (20 min)

Task: What personality traits make a great leader? A great colleague?

- Students rank traits and justify using nuanced vocabulary.

→ *Authentic professional English in a realistic context.*

TEACHER NOTES

- This topic pairs well with job interviews, leadership discussions, and IELTS speaking part 2.
- Many of these adjectives appear frequently in B2/C1 reading and listening tasks.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Write a detailed character profile of a historical or public figure using nuanced vocabulary.
2. Write a short self-evaluation using hedging language and at least 6 personality adjectives.
3. Find 5 personality adjectives from this lesson in a novel or biography.