

# CHARACTER REFERENCES

Activity taken from: Anita Pincas. (1982). *Writing English*. Macmillan Press. Unit 1.

## Exercise 1

Reading		
Look at this chart on handwriting, and do the exercise which follows.		
An uncrossed 't' shows a conscientious and well-balanced person.	Rounded tops indicate a pleasant and cooperative person.	Dots to the left show caution.
An uncrossed 't' shows laziness.	A 't' bar on the right indicates enthusiasm and a quick temper.	Dots to the right show generosity.
An undotted 'i' shows absent-mindedness.	Firm dots show efficiency.	Square loops indicate an aggressive and obstinate person.
Round loops show sensitivity and imagination.	Letters open at the bottom indicate a dishonest person.	Angular tops show immaturity.
Letters without loops show independence.	A wavy bar tells us the writer is good natured and has a sense of humour.	Letters open at the top mean frankness.

## Exercise 2

Do this activity in pairs. Look at the three examples of handwriting below and discuss them with your partner. What is each writer like? Now read the three character references. Can you match each character reference with one of the samples of handwriting below? Fill the name of the person in on the character reference.

(i) ..... has worked with us for five years and we are sorry to see her go. She has always worked conscientiously and efficiently. She shows imagination; she makes well-balanced decisions, and copes well with new situations. She has a very pleasant personality. We therefore recommend her to you, and wish her well in her future career.

(ii) ..... has worked with us for about eight months, and has not made a good impression. She tends to be lazy, and is consistently uncooperative. Her manner is obstinate and can be on occasions rather rude. I regret to say that we cannot in all honesty recommend her for a position with your company.

(iii) ..... has been with the company for eighteen months now. She is somewhat absent-minded and a little immature, but very good natured and pleasant. She is an imaginative and stimulating member of the team, and her sense of humour has been a great asset.

### Exercise 3

(i) In the table below, only one form of the word is given. Complete the table with the corresponding nouns or adjectives, using the comments you have just read to help you.

(ii) Which qualities are *positive* and which are *negative*?

Nouns	Adjectives
balance	_____
good nature	_____
_____	absent-minded
quick temper	_____
_____	enthusiastic
dishonesty	generous
_____	_____
_____	cautious
_____	sensitive
_____	immature
aggression	imaginative
_____	_____
conscientiousness	frank
cooperation	independent
_____	_____
obstinacy	efficient
_____	_____

### LANGUAGE SUMMARY

#### 1 Describing people: character

The following tables summarise some ways of describing character. These expressions may be used to describe either *positive* or *negative* qualities.

He She	is	cheerful. aggressive. pleasant.	
She He	has a/an	cheerful aggressive pleasant	nature. temperament. disposition. character. personality.
Her distinctive characteristics are obstinacy and selfishness.			

These expressions, which are more hesitant, are only used for *negative* qualities.

	has shows	a	strong slight noticeable	tendency to	
He She	tends to				be untidy.
	can	often sometimes on occasions occasionally			



2 *Linking words for description: similarities and differences*

When a person has two *similar* qualities (both positive or both negative), you can relate sentences like this:

She has a very generous disposition	. She is also very good humoured. and is also very good humoured. , and is very good humoured as well. , as well as being very good humoured.
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When a person has two *contradictory* qualities (one positive and one negative), you can relate sentences like this:

He is	usually generally	good natured	, but . In spite of this, . Nevertheless, . However,	he is sometimes obstinate. he can be obstinate. he has a tendency to be obstinate.
Although he is usually good natured, he		tends to can	be	obstinate at times.

Exercise 4

Look at the handwriting sample below and then choose the right adjective to complete description (i) opposite. Use the handwriting chart to help you. Do the same for (ii) and then fill in the blanks in description (iii).

Anthony May

This man is | good natured | . He has a tendency to be | quick tempered | .  
| absent-minded | and has a/an | aggressive | personality. There is | obstinate | | cautious |  
also an element of | immaturity | in his character. | frankness |

Aliecia Smith

Her distinctive characteristics are | sensitivity | and | efficiency |  
| imagination | . Although she tends to be | absent-minded | , | obstinacy | | immature |  
she has a | pleasant and cooperative | nature. She is | generous and independent |  
| good humoured | and has an | open | attitude to life. | well balanced | | independent |

Jonathan Simpson

..... is rather ..... He tends to be ..... and is .....

### Exercise 5

(i) Join the following sentences using linking words from the language summary.

- 1 He is a very enthusiastic person. He is humorous.
- 2 He has a rather sensitive nature. He is very imaginative.
- 3 He has a pleasant and cooperative personality. He tends to be a little absent-minded.
- 4 She has a generous nature. There is an element of immaturity in her character.
- 5 He is independent. He can be aggressive.
- 6 She is usually good humoured. She can on occasions be rather obstinate.
- 7 He is enthusiastic and good natured. He is rather immature.
- 8 She is very balanced. She is very kind hearted.
- 9 He is very efficient. He is conscientious.
- 10 She has a frank and open character. She tends to be rather too outspoken.

### Exercise 6

(ii) Rewrite these descriptions using linking words to join the sentences.

Anna Higgins

This person is rather immature. She tends to be obstinate. She can on occasions be rather aggressive. She is frank and open. She has, on the whole, a generous nature.

Pat Simmonds

Pat is a conscientious and well-balanced person. Her distinctive qualities are efficiency and neatness. She has a pleasant and cooperative personality. She shows a good deal of independence.