

22 Read the model below, underline the topic sentences of each paragraph, and then complete the outline plan on the right.

Alternative  
A.

Describe a person you admire and explain why you admire him or her.



- \* Introduction - Gary - fellow student
- \* Main Body

**DESCRIBE**

physical appearance

.....

Personality/Behaviour/Interests

.....

Life/lifestyles/beliefs

.....

**EXPLAIN/REASON**

"Why":

.....

"Why":

.....

- \* Conclusion

.....

The person I admire most is not famous at all, yet to my mind his achievements are as important as those of any historical figure. Gary Young is a fellow student of mine at college, and for him this fact itself is a major achievement.

Gary suffers from cerebral palsy, which makes it almost impossible for him to control his movements. As a result, he spends his life in a wheelchair, cannot write with a pen or pencil, and speaks so slowly and strangely that it takes patience to understand what he is saying. This, together with his thin, twisted body and awkward facial expressions, can often cause people to treat him as if he were a backward child.

However, behind his physical appearance, Gary is a warm, fun-loving, intelligent person. His disability affects his muscles, not his mind or personality. He enjoys the same things any student does — listening to music, meeting friends, and so on — and he is not only the best student in our class, but also has a wonderful sense of humour and genuine interest in other people. Unable to express himself easily in conversation, he uses a special typewriter to write letters to his friends, and beautiful poems which show the true depth of his thoughts and character. He lives a very regular life, studying every day and never allowing himself to fall behind in his schoolwork. Of course he enjoys going out as well, and he believes that a balance of work and play make life happy and fulfilling.

The main reason I admire him so much is that he is determined to lead a normal life, in spite of the physical difficulties he has to overcome. Although his condition prevented him from going to school, he gave himself an education by studying at home. He lives alone, cooking and cleaning with the help of equipment he designed himself, and he leads a full social life with his many friends, including visits to the theatre, or even (on one memorable occasion when I was with him) to the funfair.

Another reason I admire Gary, is the fact that he never feels sorry for himself. He says, for instance, that being unable to move around simply gives him more time to think. In fact, he always manages to see the bright side of any situation, so that, far from needing his friends to comfort him, he actually cheers us up when we are worried or depressed!

I would admire Gary as a person even if he didn't have any disability; the fact that he does, and refuses to let it spoil his life, makes him the most remarkable person I know.

Alternative B: Describe an important person from the past and explain why he/she is of significant importance 13

# UNIT 1 Describing People

1 Look at the people in the photographs and talk about each in terms of appearance, personality and life/lifestyle.

**Appearance:** *How would you describe each person's appearance? Which features of their appearance are most noticeable? What does their way of sitting, looking, etc. suggest?*

**Personality:** *What do you imagine each person is like?*

**Life & Lifestyle:** *What else do you imagine about each person concerning such things as profession, ambitions, interests/hobbies, daily routine, etc?*



A composition describing a person should consist of:

- an **introduction** giving brief information about who the person is, where/how you met him/her, how you heard about him/her, etc;
  - a **main body** which may include description of such things as physical appearance, personality/behaviour, manner/mannerisms and/or details of the person's life and lifestyle, (hobbies, interests, everyday activities, etc.) and
  - a **conclusion** in which you comment on why the person is of interest, express your feelings/opinion concerning the person, etc.
- In a descriptive composition of a person, you may also be asked to *explain why* this person is successful/admirable/unusual, etc, why he/she made such a strong impression on you, how he/she has influenced you, etc.
  - Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence which summarises the paragraph. The content of the paragraph depends on the topic itself and where the emphasis is placed.
  - Descriptions of people may be included in several other types of writing tasks such as narratives, letters, assessment reports, etc.

## Points to Consider

- To describe **physical appearance**, you should give details of the person's **height/build, age, facial features, hair, clothing**, etc. moving from the most general aspects to the most specific details. *e.g. Bill, who is in his early twenties, is quite tall and well-built, with thick black hair and piercing blue eyes. He is usually dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.*
- To describe **personality and behaviour**, you can support your description with examples of manner and mannerism: *e.g. Mark is rather unsociable, usually sitting silently in a corner observing others from a distance.*
- To describe **life, lifestyle and beliefs**, you should talk about the person's habits, interests, profession, daily routine, opinions, etc. *e.g. Being both a university student and a part-time assistant in a supermarket, Janet has little free time to go out in the evenings.*
- If the instructions for the writing task ask you to describe someone related to the present, *e.g. "Describe a person who is unusual ..."*, you will describe the person using Present tenses. If you are asked to describe sb related to the past, sb who is no longer alive, or sb whom you met some time ago ... *e.g. "Describe a famous person you met who was not as you expected ..."*, you will describe the person using Past tenses.
- The use of descriptive vocabulary, *e.g. stunning, slender, etc.* and a variety of linking words and structures will make your writing more interesting.

## Introduction

### Paragraph 1

*who the person is/  
when/how you first met/  
saw him/her*

## Main Body

### Paragraph 2

*physical appearance*

### Paragraph 3

*personality/behaviour (with  
justification/examples)*

### Paragraph 4

*life/lifestyle/beliefs*

### Paragraph 5

*explanation 1 + justification*

### Paragraph 6

*explanation 2 + justification*

## Conclusion

### Final Paragraph

*comments/feelings about  
person*

## Linking Words and Structures

- Writing which contains a series of short sentences or the same simple linking words (such as "and") soon becomes boring and repetitive. To avoid this, you should use a wide range of linking words and structures.

### with

*She is tall and striking, with long blonde hair.*

### Relative Clauses who/which/whose

*My neighbour, who is slightly eccentric, has dozens of filthy cats.*

*He is a scruffy child whose clothes are torn and dirty.*

*He has a broken nose, which makes him look like a boxer.*

### Result so/such (a) ... (that)

*She is so beautiful (that) she looks like a film star.*

### Addition in addition to, as well as/besides, moreover, furthermore, not only ... but also ..., etc.

*He is very tall, in addition to being very thin.*

*My grandmother has deep wrinkles, as well as thin grey hair.*

*He is not only artistic, but also a successful businessman.*

### Contrast but/yet/However/Nonetheless/Even so + clause

Although/(Even) though/While + clause

In spite of/Despite + -ing form/noun/the fact that

*He is temperamental, but/yet he is a loyal friend.*

*He looks as though he's an old man. However, he is only 35.*

*Although he has a huge, powerful body, he's a very gentle person.*

*In spite of being very busy, she always has time for her children.*

## Linking Words and Structures

### ● LINKING CAUSE AND EFFECT

She is open and friendly. (Cause)      She is popular. (Effect)

because/as/since      owing to/due to (+ -ing/noun/the fact that) ...

As a result/consequence of      A/the result of ... is...      ... ; as a result, ...

*She is popular because she is open and friendly.*

*She is popular due to being/due to the fact that she is open and friendly.*

*A result of her being open is that she is popular..*

..., so ...      therefore/for this reason ...      The reason (that/why) ... is...

*She is open and friendly, so she is popular.*

*She is open and friendly, therefore she is popular.*

*The reason she is popular is that she is open and friendly.*

## Impressions, Opinions and Reactions

I think/feel/etc (that)      It seems to me that      To me/To my mind

As far as I'm concerned      In my opinion/view/eyes

sb seems/appears to be ...      sb strikes people/comes across as (being) ...

sb gives the impression of being .../the impression that ...

I/people/etc find/consider sb to be ...      I think of/see/regard sb as being ...

## PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR

- In descriptions of people we can include a clear description of a person's personality and behaviour with a variety of **character words**.

e.g. *He is friendly and honest.*

*She speaks very rudely.*

*He is greedy and a miser.*

These words should be **justified** in an explanation or example. e.g. *Brian, who is very sociable, enjoys going to parties and meeting people.*

- If you describe negative qualities, you should use mild language. Use: **tend to, seem to, is rather, can sometimes be**, etc. e.g. *Sarah is an excellent worker, but she can sometimes be rather impatient. (not: She is impatient.)*

- You may describe personality and behaviour with examples of **manner and mannerisms** (the gestures people use, the way they speak/walk, etc)

e.g. *Timothy is a very tolerant father;*

*no matter what his children do he doesn't lose his temper.*

Note that personality characteristics should be stressed in certain types of writing, for example when you recommend someone for a job.

*From the book*

*Successful Writing*

*by Virginia Evans.*