

English for Describing People: Describing Personalities

It's difficult to describe a personality. Can you say what kind of personality you have? One method for describing people that has become . . . maybe it's not *popular*, but it's widely used in the U.S. is the "Type A – Type B" method.

We say a Type A person is a person who needs stress, who loves stress, who is *always* stressed. If you meet someone who is on vacation, and instead of sitting at the beach with a drink in their hand, they're saying "We get going! The museum opens in 20min, I want to be the first person in line! Let's go! Let's go! Let's go!" That person is probably 'Type A.'

Type B is the other end of the spectrum. Type B is a very *relaxed* person. Another word is 'laid back.' A Type B person who, in the middle of the financial crisis is sitting in his office making jokes. The rest of the entire company is running around in a total panic and he's saying "Eh, we'll be okay. Hey, did you hear the newest joke?!" Or . . .

Okay, I think I did a bad job with Type B. A Type B person can be *responsible*, he's just not as stressed as a Type A person. We use the terms Type A and Type B a lot in English. If I say "I'm a Type B person, I'm not gonna get too wound up. . ." or "My boss is a Type A person and I tell you what, it's hard working with him, because all he really does is yell."

We also use other words for the same personality types. For Type A, we can say a person is 'stressed,' we can say a person is 'high-strung.' Uhm, I don't have many high-strung friends. I don't get along with him. But, when I was a student, I had a roommate who was high-strung and. . . I think he's going to have a heart attack in the next ten to twenty minutes.

For Type B people I know more slang words, because it's a quality I value in people. Uh, Type B, you can say a person is 'relaxed.' I like the word 'laid back,' because it's a phrase that makes you imagine a person relaxing in a chair, they're 'laid back' in their chair and they *aren't stressed*. They aren't in a hurry, they're relaxed. My brother and sister use the word 'chill,' and I think that maybe I'm five to seven years too old to use 'chill.' I don't know. It seems like younger slang, but a 'chill' person is the same thing as a 'relaxed' person.

Another thing you want to say about personalities is a sense of humor. A sense of humor is very important. And we say in English "he's got a great sense of humor" or "she's got a great sense of humor." But we also say things like "She's a funny person." "He's a funny guy." "He. . . loves to laugh." "He's fun to be around."

"Fun to be around," strangely enough, is a phrase you will hear a lot describing people. It's a phrase that means, basically, "the life of the party." I don't know if I'm fun to be around. I think I am when I'm teaching, but normally, I'm a bookworm. That's not a personality trait, but it's

definitely not a fun person to be around if you always sitting around drinking coffee reading books.

I hope that this has been a good start for you in describing personalities. What are some other terms you can use in describing personality? Do you think you're a Type A person or a Type B person? Do you think most of your friends have the same type of personality? Do you think that's because you have the same type of personality? Do you prefer to be around people who have your personality or do you like people who are very different from you?

Let me know what you think.