

**Lesson
23**

Denotation and Connotation

Teaching

A word’s **denotation** is its dictionary definition. A word can also make people feel or think a certain way. These feelings and ideas are the **connotations** of a word. Words with the same meaning can have different “shades of meaning”—that is, they can be understood differently.

Positive connotation: Being on the track team has made Alan *slender* and *lean*. (attractively thin)

Neutral connotation: Being on the track team has made Alan *thin*.

Negative connotation: Being on the track team has made Alan *skinny* and *scrawny*. (unattractively thin)

Be sure that the words you use have the right connotation as well as the right denotation.

A. Identifying Positive and Negative Connotations

Each pair of phrases includes synonyms with different connotations. Put a + sign next to the one with a positive connotation and a – sign next to the one with a negative connotation. Use a dictionary or thesaurus if needed.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. a powerful stink _____ | 6. answered with arrogance _____ |
| a powerful aroma _____ | answered with confidence _____ |
| 2. a dynamic leader _____ | 7. sloppy clothes _____ |
| a pushy leader _____ | casual clothes _____ |
| 3. squandered his money _____ | 8. an aggressive attitude _____ |
| spent his money _____ | a hostile attitude _____ |
| 4. a reckless plan _____ | 9. an easygoing friend _____ |
| a daring plan _____ | a lazy friend _____ |
| 5. energetic children _____ | 10. a thoughtful response _____ |
| wild children _____ | a calculated response _____ |

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More Practice

B. Connotations in Action

In the first paragraph below, circle the words that have a positive connotation. In the second paragraph, circle the words that have a negative connotation. Use a dictionary or thesaurus if needed.

Positive connotation:

Ms. Baxter has been a(n) (valuable, costly) employee of this company for three years. In that time, she has expressed many (militant, strong) opinions. Her methods of solving problems are sometimes (unusual, bizarre). In short, she is a real (leader, show-off).

Negative connotation:

I was surprised to get a birthday gift from my Aunt Joanna. She is (an inquisitive person, a real snoop), so she had asked many of my relatives what I might like. I tore the (colorful, gaudy) paper off the package and found a shirt made of (flimsy, delicate) material. It was covered with (detailed, fussy) embroidery and (flashy, eye-catching) sequins. It certainly was a(n) (strange, exotic) present.

C. Vocabulary Challenge

Replace each word with a synonym that has positive connotations. Then write a sentence using the synonym correctly. Use a dictionary or thesaurus if needed.

1. nosy _____

2. odd _____

3. cheap _____

4. overprotective _____

5. glare _____
