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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Vocabulary

### Antonyms



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*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Finn**

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Finn...

**Catherine**

And I'm Catherine.

**Finn**

In today's programme, we're talking about antonyms.

**Catherine**

Antonyms are words with opposite meanings.

**Finn**

Like big and small...

**Catherine**

Fat and thin... We're going to give you lots of examples of antonyms today. And we'll give you a top tip for improving your vocabulary.

**Finn**

So let's start by listening to someone called Ruth. She's shopping and trying on shoes.

**Catherine**

While you listen, think about this question: What colour are the two pairs of shoes with heels?

**INSERT**

**Assistant**

Here's a selection.

**Ruth**

I'll try these on first... Hmm – they're a bit **uncomfortable** – too **tight**.

**Assistant**

OK. Try these – they're the next size up.

**Ruth**

Hmm... they're a little more **comfortable**, but they're too **wide** at the back and they feel a bit **loose**! I've got very **narrow** feet.

**Assistant**

What about the flat ones?

**Ruth**

They look a bit **old-fashioned**.

**Assistant**

These **dark** blue ones with the heels are really popular at the moment.

**Ruth**

Yes, they're quite **trendy**, but I think I prefer the **light blue** ones... Actually, the dark blue ones are quite nice ... Oh, I'm so **indecisive**!

**Finn**

So that was Ruth shopping there. And we asked you: what colours were the two pairs of shoes with heels?

**Catherine**

And the answer is: one pair was **dark** blue and one pair was **light** blue.

**Finn**

**Dark** and **light** are antonyms. Here they're describing two different shades of blue.

**Catherine**

Now we often find antonyms when we are comparing things. So listen to this clip for some more opposites.

**INSERT CLIP 1**

**Ruth**

Hmm – they're a bit **uncomfortable** – too **tight**.

**Assistant**

OK. Try these – they're the next size up.

**Ruth**

...they're a little more **comfortable**, but they're too **wide** at the back and feel a bit **loose**! I've got very **narrow** feet.

**Catherine**

So we had **tight**, spelt **t-i-g-h-t**, meaning fitting too closely...

**Finn**

...and we had the opposite **loose**, spelt **l-o-o-s-e**, meaning not fitting closely.

**Catherine**

Ruth also said that one pair of shoes were too **wide** because she's got **narrow** feet. So **wide**, spelt **w-i-d-e**, means the space from one side to the other is bigger than usual or bigger than comfortable. **Narrow**, spelt **n-a-r-r-o-w**, means the opposite – the space from one side to the other is smaller than usual or smaller than comfortable.

**Finn**

There were two other words that are opposites – **comfortable** and **uncomfortable**. The difference between these two words is just two letters **u** and **n**, which form the prefix **un**.

**Catherine**

And in English we often use the prefixes **un**, **in** (spelt **i-n**) and **dis** (spelt **d-i-s**) to make antonyms. If we put one of these prefixes at the start of the word, it can change the meaning of the word to its opposite.

**Finn**

So Ruth said that she was **indecisive**. By adding the prefix **in** (**i-n**) to the word **decisive**, which means being able to make decisions easily, we make **indecisive**, which has the opposite meaning – not being able to make decisions easily.

**Catherine**

What are you Finn?

**Finn**

I'm a little indecisive, I must say.

**Catherine**

Are you sure about that? Not really?

**Finn**

Very good.

**Catherine**

Let's have another short clip with two more antonyms. Can you spot them?

**INSERT 1 CLIP 2**

**Assistant**

What about the flat ones?

**Ruth**

They look a bit **old-fashioned**.

**Assistant**

These dark blue ones with the heels are really popular at the moment.

**Ruth**

Yes, they're quite **trendy**.

**Catherine**

So we had **old-fashioned** and **trendy**.

**Finn**

You describe something as **old-fashioned** when it looks like it's from a time in the past. ...

**Catherine**

...whereas something that is **trendy** is modern, up-to-date or cool.

**IDENT**

6 Minute Vocabulary from BBC Learning English.

**Catherine**

And we're talking about antonyms, which are words with opposite meanings.

**Finn**

The prefixes **un**, **in** and **dis** are often used to make antonyms, for example: **decisive** and **indecisive**. Now all the words we've seen earlier are adjectives, but other parts of speech can be antonyms.

**Catherine**

So you can have verbs, like **ask** and **answer**...

**Finn**

... which is what we're going to do now because it's time for a quiz. So, what is the opposite of the word tight: is it a) loose or b) narrow?

**Catherine**

The answer is a) **loose**.

**Finn**

Well done if you got that right. Number two: trendy. Is the opposite a) modern or b) old-fashioned?

**Catherine**

It's b) **old-fashioned**.

**Finn**

That's correct! And number three: comfortable. Is the opposite a) uncomfortable or b) uncomfortable?

**Catherine**

And the answer is b) **uncomfortable**.

**Finn**

And that's the end of the quiz – so well done if you got them right.

**Catherine**

And now here's today's top tip for learning vocabulary: when you learn a new word, have a look in the dictionary to see if there is a prefix that will help you make the opposite word.

**Finn**

Yes, and that way you can get two words for the price of one!

**Catherine**

Bargain!

**Finn**

Absolutely. There's more about this at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again soon for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

**Both**

Bye!

## Vocabulary points to take away

**comfortable:** feeling pleasant to wear

This sofa is so soft and comfortable, I could sleep on it!

**uncomfortable:** feeling unpleasant or slightly painful to wear

Seats in planes are so uncomfortable – there's never enough room for your legs.

**decisive:** good at making decisions quickly and easily

You have to be decisive if you work as a doctor in the emergency department. You often have to act quickly – hesitating over how to treat can be a matter of life and death.

**indecisive:** not good at making decisions easily

She always had to arrange the holiday. He was so indecisive, they would never have got round to booking anything if she'd left it to him to organise.

**dark:** almost black in colour

"Look at those dark clouds! It's going to rain in a minute!"

**light:** pale in colour

The cream colour is too light against the white. We need a darker colour like blue or red.

**narrow:** small in size from side to side

The space between the cars is too narrow– you won't be able to get your bike through.

**wide:** large in size from side to side

"Do you think the mirror will fit in on the wall?" "Oh yes, the space between the two walls is very wide.

**tight:** fitting too closely, so feeling uncomfortable

I think I need to lose weight – my trousers have got too tight.

**loose:** not fitting closely

When it's really hot, it's good to wear tops that are loose as they keep you cool.

**old-fashioned:** belonging to a past age; not modern

He was quite old-fashioned. He still used a radio and didn't have a mobile.

**trendy/modern/up-to-date/cool:** very fashionable

She looked like a model in her trendy leather jacket and stripy leggings.