

Appearances

WORD LIST

chic debonair disheveled dowdy drab
garb ostentatious rumple unsightly veneer

Have you ever heard the adages “You can’t judge a book by its cover” or “All that glitters is not gold”? These famous sayings mean that appearances can be misleading. Still, differences in how things look make life interesting. The words in this lesson give you many options for describing appearances.

- 1. chic** (shĕk) *adjective*
Stylish; fashionable
• Eugenia bought the **chic** outfit from a Parisian designer.
- 2. debonair** (dĕb'ə-nâr') *adjective* from French *de*, “from” + *bon*, “good” + *aire*, “family”
Charming in a friendly but sophisticated way
• The **debonair** man bowed as he offered the woman his seat.

Dowdy and *chic* are generally used to describe women; in contrast, *debonair* typically refers to men.

People used to think charm and sophistication resulted from proper breeding, or coming from a “good family.” The origin of *debonair* reflects this belief.

- 3. disheveled** (dĭ-shĕv'əld) *adjective* from Old French *dis-*, “apart” + *chevel*, “hair”
Messy; untidy in personal appearance
• After an afternoon at the playground, the child was totally **disheveled**.



disheveled

- 4. dowdy** (dou'dē) *adjective*
Having an old-fashioned appearance; shabby and out of style
• Susanna felt **dowdy** in the gray dress her mother made her wear to the party.
dowdiness *noun* The woman's **dowdiness** stood out at the elegant party.
- 5. drab** (drăb) *adjective*
Having a faded, dull appearance
• The old couch looked **drab** next to the bright new chairs.
drabness *noun* The **drabness** of the scenery emphasized the tragic nature of the play.

6. **garb** (gärb)

- a. *noun* Clothing for a particular job or occasion
- White clothing and a tall hat are a chef's usual **garb**.
- b. *verb* To dress in a particular way
- The villagers **garbed** themselves in regional costumes for the traditional dance.

7. **ostentatious** (ös'tën-tā'shəs) *adjective* from Latin *ostendere*, "to show"

Showy; meant to impress others

- Our tour guide called our attention to the gold-covered faucets and marble floors of the **ostentatious** bathroom.

ostentation *noun* We couldn't believe the **ostentation** of the movie star who wore huge diamond earrings to the homeless shelter.

8. **rumple** (rüm'pəl) *verb*

To wrinkle or crease

- Linen is a material that **rumpled** easily.

rumpled *adjective* My clothes are **rumpled** because I had to sleep in them at the airport after my flight was canceled.

9. **unsightly** (ün-sīt'lē) *adjective* from *un-*, "not" + *sight*

Unpleasant to look at

- The garbage that littered the street was smelly and **unsightly**.

unsightliness *noun* The **unsightliness** of the messy room made Mom threaten to reduce Gerda's allowance.

10. **veneer** (və-nîr') *noun*

- a. A thin, usually decorative layer of fine material glued onto an inferior material
- The plastic table was covered with a wood **veneer** that made it look like a fancy piece of furniture.
- b. An appearance giving a false, positive impression
- He hid his unhappiness beneath a cheerful **veneer**.

The word *ostentatious* has a negative connotation.

Both meanings of *veneer* refer to some sort of nice "covering" for something inferior or unpleasant.

WORD ENRICHMENT

The French have a word for it

Three of the words in this lesson come from French: *chic*, *debonair*, and *disheveled*. Long known as a center of fashion and style, France's capital city, Paris, is home to many famous clothes designers.

France is also known for its fine cooking, which is reflected in some French words we have borrowed. The word *cuisine*, for example, means "a type of cooking" or "a way of preparing food." A *gourmet* is a person who knows about and enjoys eating fine food. *Gourmand*, which can mean the same thing, can also refer to a person who eats too much. Perhaps you have had *hors d'oeuvres* (pronounced or DERVES), or appetizers before a meal.

The French are also known for their attention to manners. The phrase *faux pas* (foe PAH) means "a social blunder." Its actual translation from French is "false step."