

Nuance

What is NUANCE?

Nuance is a small, but important difference in meaning, feeling, or intention.

Two words or expressions can seem very similar, but they are not always exactly the same.

Compare:

I like this movie.

I love this movie.

Both are positive, but love is stronger than like. That difference in strength is a nuance.

Think of nuance like this:

Meaning isn't always black and white. There can be many shades (or levels) between.

For example:

 **angry** → annoyed → irritated → frustrated → **furious** 

Nuance can come from:

1. Strength

Some words express - *more or less* - the same idea.

dislike → hate

good → excellent

worried → terrified

2. Feeling

Two words can describe the same basic situation but create different feelings.

slim → generally positive

skinny → can be perceived as negative

3. Certainty

English gives us different ways to show how sure we are about something.

He is at home. → very certain

He must be at home. → strong conclusion

He might be at home. → possibility

4. Formality

The meaning can stay similar while the situation changes.

Can you help me? → less formal

Would you mind helping me? → more polite / formal

5. Intention

Sometimes the same words can communicate different things depending on the situational context.

"That's interesting."

This could mean ...

😊 *I genuinely think that's interesting.*

or

😐 *I'm not convinced.*

or

😬 *I don't like that idea.*

Context creates nuance.

Activity 1

Look at each pair. What's the difference?

I **like** him.

I **love** him.

A. Difference: _____

She is **confident**.

She is **arrogant**.

B. Difference: _____

He **might** come.

He **will** come.

C. Difference: _____

That's **interesting**.

That's **fascinating**.

D. Difference: _____



Remember: *You don't need a dictionary definition.*

Ask yourself:

Is one stronger? More positive? More negative? More certain? More formal?

Activity 2

Put the words in order from **least** → **most** separated by commas.

A. annoyed · angry · furious · irritated

B. good · excellent · okay · amazing

C. possible · certain · unlikely · probable

D. like · enjoy · love · adore

Activity 3

Some words have similar dictionary meanings but different connotations.

Connotation is the feeling association a word creates.

Example:

childlike → usually positive / neutral

childish → often negative

Decide whether each word is usually positive (+), negative (-), or neutral (0).

confident

cheap

arrogant

determined

curious

stubborn

nosy

relaxed

economical

lazy

Activity 4

Read each sentence. Decide what the speaker probably means.

A. "You could try studying a little more."

Is the speaker:

- ☐ giving a gentle suggestion
- ☐ giving a strong order
- ☐ criticizing someone directly

B. "Well... that's one way of doing it."

The speaker probably:

- ☐ strongly approves
- ☐ is uncertain or slightly critical
- ☐ doesn't understand

C. "I suppose we could go."

Does this sound like:

- ☐ enthusiastic agreement
- ☐ reluctant agreement
- ☐ complete disagreement