

SELF IMAGES

As you get ready to go out, you glance in the mirror for a final check of your look. You're happy with what you see. The hair is neat and nicely styled, your complexion is tanned and your smile could make any Hollywood actor jealous. Later in the evening, you are more than happy to pose when friends get their phones out to take photos. The next day, however, when the photos appear on social networking sites, you are horrified. You don't recognise the person you are looking at. How can that be you? The nose looks far too big, the skin too white and the hair is all over the place! So just why do we look different in photos to how we imagine ourselves to be?

There isn't just one reason. Firstly, people often look better early in the evening than later on. You have probably just come out of the shower, brushed your hair and put on your elegant clothes. If there was something wrong, you would do something about it and then admire yourself again. When the photos are taken, you may be tired or perhaps full after a good meal. Your hair may not look quite so good as it did. Often, when people get home and look in the mirror, they think: "I look terrible". It's just that, being home and alone, it doesn't matter.

Another reason is to do with angles. In the mirror, we see our nose, mouth and chin from above. This is more flattering than looking up from below. We also turn slightly and smile trying to get the best look possible. Unfortunately, our friends probably aren't as careful. Photos are taken when we aren't ready, often from the wrong position. You could watch carefully to see when someone is going to take a photo and pose for it but, although the photos might look better, your evening won't be very relaxing.

Finally, we all have a tendency to measure and compare ourselves against others. Why is it that other people always look better in photos than we do? Even people who aren't as good-looking, or don't wear such stylish clothes as you? The reason for this is that you could see them all evening, so you know exactly what they looked like. The photos of them are not unexpected in any way. However, when you look at a photo of yourself, you are comparing it not to how you really looked that evening, but to your own idealized image of yourself that you have in your own head. In that version of yourself, your skin is clear and fresh-looking, your hair is neatly in place, and your clothes flatter you.

So what can we do about it? On the one hand, for all the reasons above, photos of ourselves will rarely please us. There's a reason why many celebrities do everything they can not to be photographed in public. On the other hand, you should remember that your friends feel exactly the same. So, when they look at photos of you, they will be as jealous of you as you are of them. Take comfort from that but maybe avoid looking at photos taken of you which appear on other people's social networking pages.

3 Read the text. Choose the correct answer, A, B, C or D.

1 According to the article, people are pleased when they

- A see that their photos are online.
- B are compared to Hollywood actors.
- C see how they really looked when out.
- D look at themselves in the mirror before they go out.

2 The writer says that

- A most people look better before they go out.
- B this problem only affects George Clooney.
- C you should be careful who you go out with.
- D we are always pleased when we see our reflections.

3 One way to look better in photographs is to

- A show your friends how to take them.
- B be careful about who takes your photo.
- C make sure you look down on the photographer.
- D be prepared for photos that friends take.

4 The difference between looking at yourself and other people in photos is that they

- A are more attractive than you.
- B look the same as you remember them.
- C never look as good as they should.
- D are wearing more stylish clothes than you.

5 The aim of the article is to

- A make people feel better about photos of themselves.
- B help people look better when they go out.
- C criticise the effect of social media.
- D advise people on how to take attractive photos.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____