

# Denotation and Connotation



## Introduction

A word can have two kinds of meanings. A word's **denotation** is its dictionary definition. A word's **connotation** is the feeling that people associate with the word.

Compare these examples:

### Positive Connotation

My older cousin Cal is **clever**.

He asks questions because he is **curious**.

### Negative Connotation

My older cousin Cal is **sly**.

He asks questions because he is **nosy**.

The dictionary definition of the word *clever* means almost the same as the dictionary definition of *sly*. The words have similar denotations. The words *curious* and *nosy* also have similar denotations. However, they have very different connotations. The words we use carry feelings. The reader uses these feelings to form opinions.

When you write, think about the connotations of the words you choose. Ask yourself: "What effect will my words have on my readers?"



## Guided Practice

Read the sentences. Write **P** if the underlined word has a positive connotation. Write **N** if the underlined word has a negative connotation.

### Hint

Read each underlined word. Ask yourself: What feelings do I connect to the word? If the feelings are good, the word has a positive connotation. If the feelings are bad, the word has a negative connotation.

- 1 Cal is a very thrifty person. \_\_\_\_\_  
Cal is a very stingy person. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 He wears classic styles. \_\_\_\_\_  
He wears old-fashioned styles. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Every morning he trudges to work. \_\_\_\_\_  
Every morning he sprints to work. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Cal drives an antique car. \_\_\_\_\_  
Cal drives an ancient car. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 His wife insists that he fix the car himself. \_\_\_\_\_  
His wife encourages him to fix the car himself. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 One day, Cal's son requested a room of his own. \_\_\_\_\_  
One day, Cal's son demanded a room of his own. \_\_\_\_\_



## Independent Practice

For numbers 1–3, read the sentence. The answer choices have similar denotations. Which answer choice has the most positive connotation?

**1** Cal and his wife had a debate about moving to a new home.

- A** quarrel
- B** dispute
- C** discussion
- D** disagreement

**2** Cal said, “We can turn the office into an acceptable bedroom.”

- A** pleasing
- B** usable
- C** functional
- D** workable

**3** Cal’s wife wanted to move, and she was stubborn about it.

- A** pushy
- B** defiant
- C** obstinate
- D** determined

### Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

4 (A) (B) (C) (D)

5 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Number  
Correct

5

For numbers 4 and 5, read the sentence. The answer choices have similar denotations. Which answer choice has the most negative connotation?

**4** On moving day they transported all their belongings to their new home.

- A** sent
- B** lugged
- C** moved
- D** carried

**5** Cal really likes the unusual architecture of the house.

- A** odd
- B** rare
- C** unique
- D** uncommon