

65 big, large, great and tall

- 1 We use *big* mostly in an informal style.

We've got a **big** new house.
 Get your **big** feet off my flowers.
 That's a really **big** improvement.
 You're making a **big** mistake.

In a more formal style, we prefer *large* or *great*.

Large is used with concrete nouns (the names of things you can see, touch, etc).

Great is used with abstract nouns (the names of ideas etc).

It was a **large** house, situated near the river.
 I'm afraid my daughter has rather **large** feet.
 Her work showed a **great** improvement last year.

With uncountable nouns, only *great* is possible.

There was **great** confusion about the dates.
 (NOT . . . ~~big~~ confusion . . .)
 I felt **great** excitement as the meeting came nearer.

- 2 *Tall* is used to talk about vertical height (from top to bottom). It is mostly used for people; sometimes for buildings and trees. (See also 339: **tall** and **high**.)

'How **tall** are you?' 'One metre ninety-one.'



a tall man

a big man

- 3 We also use *great* to mean 'famous' or 'important'.

Do you think Napoleon was really a **great** man?
 Newton was probably the **greatest** scientist who ever lived.

- 4 We sometimes use *great* to mean 'wonderful' (very informal).

I've had a **great** idea!
 'How's the new job?' '**Great.**'
 It's a **great** car.

- 5 Note that *large* is a 'false friend' for people who speak some European languages. It does not mean the same as *wide*.

The river is a hundred metres **wide**. (NOT . . . ~~metres large~~.)