**Obese vs. Portly**

**Chat GPT**

*Study this conversation with Chat GPT. How to you rate the quality of linguistic information on the difference between the two words in comparison with the information retrieved from the corpus?*

→ What is the difference between the words obese and portly?

The words **"obese"** and **"portly"** both describe someone who is overweight, but they differ in **tone**, **connotation**, and **usage**:

1. **Obese** – This is a **clinical** and **medical** term referring to excessive body fat that poses health risks. It is often used in scientific, medical, or formal discussions about weight and health. Calling someone "obese" can sound harsh or impersonal.
2. **Portly** – This word is more **polite**, **gentle**, or even **dignified** in tone. It is often used to describe older men who are overweight but still carry themselves with a degree of respectability or affluence. It suggests a large, rounded figure but without the negative medical implications.

For example:

* **A doctor might say**: "The patient is clinically **obese**, with a BMI of 32."
* **A novelist might write**: "The **portly** gentleman adjusted his waistcoat before sitting down."

Would you like me to provide historical or literary examples of how these terms have been used?

→ At what level should these words be taught to EFL learners?

The words **"obese"** and **"portly"** should be introduced at different stages in an **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)** curriculum, based on their complexity, frequency, and appropriateness in communication.

**1. Obese → Upper-Intermediate (B2) to Advanced (C1)**

* **Why?** "Obese" is a technical, medical term, often used in health-related discussions. It appears in academic texts, medical reports, and formal news articles.
* **Teaching Context:** It should be introduced when discussing health, nutrition, or scientific vocabulary.
* **Example Lessons:** Public health issues, obesity-related diseases, formal writing.

**2. Portly → Advanced (C1)**

* **Why?** "Portly" is a **literary, formal, or somewhat old-fashioned** term. It is not commonly used in everyday speech but may appear in literature, historical contexts, or polite descriptions.
* **Teaching Context:** It is best suited for students who are studying literature, reading classic texts, or learning about nuanced adjectives for physical description.
* **Example Lessons:** Describing people in literature, Victorian or Edwardian social descriptions, euphemisms in English.

**Comparison in Teaching**

* For **general English learners**, "obese" is far more useful and should be introduced earlier.
* "Portly" is useful in **literature or formal writing**, but not essential for everyday communication.

Would you like recommendations on how to teach these words effectively in an EFL classroom?

→ Can you prepare a data-driven activity for C1 EFL learners teaching the words 'obese' and 'portly' and highlighting different contexts in which they occur.

**C1 EFL Data-Driven Learning (DDL) Activity: "Obese" vs. "Portly"**

**Objective:**

Students will analyze real-world data to understand the contextual differences between **"obese"** and **"portly"**, focusing on usage in different domains (medical, formal, literary, euphemistic).

**Materials:**

* A **corpus-based dataset** with sample sentences using *obese* and *portly* from different sources (news articles, medical reports, literature, informal speech).
* Access to an online corpus tool (e.g., COCA, BNC, or Sketch Engine).
* A worksheet with **guided discovery questions** (below).

**Activity Plan (60 minutes)**

**Step 1: Warm-Up Discussion (10 min)**

**Prompt:**

* "When describing someone who is overweight, which words do you know?" (Elicit synonyms: overweight, heavy, chubby, fat, stout, etc.)
* "How do these words sound? Formal, neutral, polite, impolite?"

Introduce the focus words: **"obese" vs. "portly"**

* Ask: “Where have you seen these words before? In what kinds of texts?”

**Step 2: Data Analysis (20 min)**

Students examine real-world usage through **corpus examples**. Provide the following dataset:

| **Sentence** | **Source** | **Context** | **Word Used** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The country has seen a rise in the number of **obese** children over the last decade. | News article | Public health | Obese |
| Studies show that being **obese** increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes. | Medical text | Scientific/clinical | Obese |
| The **portly** gentleman adjusted his waistcoat and took his seat in the dining hall. | Novel (19th-century) | Literary/historical | Portly |
| The mayor, a **portly** figure with a booming laugh, was well-liked in the town. | Biography | Polite/euphemistic | Portly |

📌 **Pair Work (Guided Discovery Questions):**

1. What types of sources use *obese*? What about *portly*?
2. Which word is more common in **scientific or news writing**?
3. Which word is used for a **polite or humorous** description?
4. Would you call someone *portly* in a medical report? Why or why not?

**Step 3: Group Discussion & Categorization (15 min)**

* Students group *obese* and *portly* under **formal vs. informal** and **clinical vs. literary** categories.
* Discuss **why writers choose certain words** in different contexts.

📌 **Key Takeaways:**  
✔ **Obese** → Formal, medical, scientific, neutral/negative connotation.  
✔ **Portly** → Literary, humorous, respectful, older men.

**Step 4: Creative Production Task (15 min)**

📌 **Task:**

* Write two **mini-descriptions** using both words:
  1. A short paragraph from a medical article about obesity.
  2. A passage from a novel describing a **portly** character.
* Share with the class and provide feedback.

**Homework / Follow-up Task**

Students find **two real-life examples** of each word from news articles, books, or online sources and bring them to the next lesson for discussion.

**Why This Works (Pedagogical Rationale)**

✔ **Data-driven**: Encourages corpus-based learning and real-world application.  
✔ **Comparative analysis**: Helps learners **internalize** differences in word choice.  
✔ **Context-based learning**: Moves beyond memorization to **practical use**.  
✔ **Active production**: Reinforces understanding through writing.

Would you like a corpus-based worksheet or digital resources to support this lesson?