

# Smokin' Hot vs. Beautiful: What's the Difference?

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You might think these terms are interchangeable, or that they mean the same thing, but listen to the nuances:

That girl is beautiful.  
That girl is smokin' hot.

Do you see it now?

In western English, predominantly in the states, the second sentence above indicates a more attractive girl than the first sentence describes. In fact, the second sentence would usually be ended with an exclamation mark to emphasize the level of attractiveness, but I didn't want to sway your judgment.

Beauty is based on a purely subjective scale – let's not kid ourselves. With this example of two words that seem synonymous, yet have subtle differences, how does the ranking on that subjective scale work? More importantly, what are the effects of that ranking?

## Splitting Hairs and Defining the Difference

We possess an endless stream of adjectives that describe the concept of beauty. Check out these examples:

- Beautiful
- Pretty
- Attractive
- Handsome
- Lovely
- Hot
- Gorgeous
- Charming
- Stunning
- Ravishing
- Smokin' hot

Grammatically, these words act as synonyms to one another, but given the rules of society, we attribute different levels of beauty or attractiveness to each of these terms. Sticking with just the two terms in the title of this post, what are the differences between smokin' hot and beautiful?

Believe it or not, it comes down to general beauty versus specific beauty.

The term beautiful, along with several other of the above adjective examples, represents a general description of attractiveness. It lacks specificity. Thus, a wider range of items or individuals can be assigned to the term beautiful, because they meet the most general requirements of attractiveness.

*(Smokin hot wolf reaction image)*

For contrast, let's look at the term smokin' hot.

The adjective, "hot" is being modified by the adverb, "smokin'." In simple terms, it implies that a person's attractiveness level is beyond just hot, and has reached such levels of beauty that it must be emphasized with an additional word.

The specificity of smokin' hot is not used to describe just anyone. Unlike the general terms beautiful, pretty, or attractive, to be considered smokin' hot requires that someone exceed the typical social construct of beauty. More often than not, this term is based solely on superficial appearances, and lends itself to completely objectify the female, male, or other subject in question.

## **Unintended Results of the Attractiveness Scale**

I don't want to talk about the psychological damages of not being considered beautiful, or the fact that the social construct of beauty often represents an unattainable standard.

What I want to talk about here pertains to the experiences of attractive women.

I myself know that I am beautiful. I do not say this to brag or to fish for compliments. I know where I am on the scale, I know how far I am from the American social construct of smokin' hot, and I'm comfortable with that.

In my life, I have been fortunate enough to know several women who certainly rank within the smokin' hot category. A few of them were even my fellow classmates during my undergrad and graduate studies. As I was thinking about writing this blog, I looked back at the shared experiences I had with these women, and I noticed some disturbing factors.

With one of the women I knew, I remember admiring her beauty from afar, because she was/is amazingly gorgeous. I also remember she almost always sat against the wall or in the back, and she didn't contribute much in class during our undergraduate studies. In fact, it wasn't until graduate studies that I realized her level of brilliance.

One of my professors had us make posts on an online messaging platform, and we had to reply to several of our classmates. As it was a small class, you got to see everyone's internal thoughts rather quickly. Her interpretation of Renaissance literature blew my mind away! I had NO idea she had this level of skill or intelligence, because I got stuck on the gorgeous façade of her body.

From then on I made an effort to try and engage her to talk in class. I noticed others do the same. Granted, we were in a smaller class, and many of us had known each other for years within the major, and perhaps that made her feel more comfortable as well. When I started hanging out with her and some of the other grad students socially, she talked about her life and her experiences.

*(Bitch face image)*

She told us that people hit on her constantly since she was a teenager, seeing her for nothing more than a trophy or a conquest. She tried dismissing them politely at first, but they didn't stop, and often made her feel unsafe. She had to develop what she called the "bitch face" as a way to tell people to back off! Most of her life she had been seen but not heard, because her level of attractiveness was so high that people never expected anything out of her. She could have taken the easy road and let people do things for her, buy things for her, but that's not who she was/is. Yes, physically she was and remains breathtakingly attractive, but she refuses to let her brilliant mind stay idle.

I had two other grad students in my class in similar situations. Both phenomenally gorgeous, and both also had to create facades that pushed people away. The bitch face defense seems a common tool among smokin' hot women who are also blessed with brains.

As I thought about my female friends and how they dealt with this stigma of beauty, I thought about myself and what I have done.

Yes, I'm beautiful, but I never felt like people expected me to just sit there, say nothing, and be pretty. My level of beauty has always been pleasing enough that people enjoy my presence, but part of that enjoyment exchange has given me the access to be outspoken, to say my ideas without fear, and to have lengthy discussions with all manner of individuals. I'm sure that I get objectified for my level of attractiveness, but because I never had to contend with such dismissive behavior from onlookers, as my smokin' hot friends have had to do, I learned early on how to assert my dominance in a conversation. My degree of beauty may have opened the door to these conversations, but I have always felt that people continued listening to me more for my mind than for my looks.

## **Brilliant Minds in Beautiful Bodies**

*(Agent Carter image)*

Going beyond myself and my own experiences, I see similar examples in television today. The show *Agent Carter*, for example, has the lead female character as both beautiful and brilliant. Physically, the actress playing Peggy Carter, Hayley Atwell, is quite good-looking, but she is not considered by societal standards to be smokin' hot.

I think this was a deliberate choice by the writers and directors.

By choosing a beautiful but not smokin' hot actress to play Carter, it confirms the fact that if a woman is too beautiful she will NOT be listened to. Instead, she would be treated like how

everyone treated the characters played by Marilyn Monroe, for instance – they patted the hot bombshell on the head and let her giggle her way through everything. They expected nothing more of her than for her beauty to please them.

In this current season of Agent Carter – and by the way \*\*\*SPOILER ALERT\*\*\* – the show goes one step further to underscore this aspect of the attractiveness scale.

Peggy's main adversary right now, Whitney Frost (Wynn Everett), is a woman with such genius level intelligence that her brilliance is off the charts, as described in the show. Frost's back story shows that she possessed a technological aptitude from a young age, but it also shows her having one of the great flaws of true genius, which is a lack of social skills.

Frost's mother, a single woman who had nothing except her looks to get her through life, consistently chastises her daughter for not being nice to the man who is taking care of them, a man who treats Frost's mother as a kept woman/prostitute. As Frost grows up, her mother's relationship with this man deteriorates, and when he finally leaves, Frost's mother blames her daughter in part for not being nicer to him. The mother then takes the teenage Frost into the bathroom to show her her reflection and to tell her that no one in life will ever take her seriously for her brains, because she's a woman.

(Remember, this is supposed to be early 1920s/1930s mentality).

From this impressionable age, Frost learns that she has to hide not only her intelligence, but her animosity towards those who see her only for her beauty. Instead of developing the bitch face, though, as 21st century women do, Frost does the exact opposite. She creates something akin to what I call the helpless doll face as a way to play on the desires of her onlookers, only to use those desires against them.

Frost uses people by letting them believe they are using her. She uses that leverage to get in a position of power. Frost becomes a famous movie actress married to a wealthy scientist/businessman. Through her power over her pushover husband, she can use her helpless doll face to manipulate him into practically anything, allowing her to assert her brilliance from the sidelines as she gets her husband's company to lead their research down the scientific avenues of her choosing.

*(WhitneyFrost-Growing-Scar-Mirror image)*

Of course, as she gets inflicted with zero matter, and becomes more physically powerful, she no longer needs her husband, and gets rid of him after he betrays her. Yet even with this immense power she now wields, the secret society of men she aligns herself with still mostly refuse to see her brilliance. All they can see is how the zero matter has scarred her once stunning face.

To be honest, she still looks amazingly beautiful, even with the weird zero matter lines on her face, but the men's reactions of absolute disgust to her visage further underscore the concept and trappings of the smokin' hot label. These men have attributed everything she has, her worth, to

her high level of beauty. In their eyes, without that beauty she loses everything, hence their reactions. They cannot see her as anything other than an object of beauty, despite her brilliance.

Due to the era and the social constructs, Frost chose to go with the whims of society and used their label of smokin' hot against them. Manipulating people and navigating through the system allowed her to move far, even while being forced to the sidelines. In playing the game within a society that does not possess the same level of female mobility, compared to modern day society, though, Frost seals her own fate. By allowing society to label her as smokin' hot, she will remain in the objectified position, either as something wondrous for them to look at, or as a monster for them to try and control.