

75 Quantity

In English there are many ways to express general or specific quantities, say whether quantities are adequate, and compare different quantities.

See also:

Singular and plural nouns **69**

Countable and uncountable nouns **70**

75.1 USING QUANTITY PHRASES

English has different phrases for quantities when the exact number is not known.

"Some" is used when there are more than one, but the exact quantity is unknown.

There are **some** buildings.



"A few" is used for small numbers.

There are **a few** buildings.



"Lots of" is used for large numbers.

There are **lots of** buildings.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

There are **some** very old trees in my local park.



There are **some** vegetables that I really don't like.



There are **a few** items on the menu that I'd like to try.



There are **a few** cars parked outside my house.



There are **a few** sights that I'd like to see while I'm here.



Lots of my friends rely on trains to get to work.



There are **lots of** mountains in the Alps that I'd love to climb.



There are **lots of** people waiting outside the gallery.



75.2 "ENOUGH / TOO MANY" WITH COUNTABLE NOUNS

"Enough," "not enough," and "too many" are used to talk about quantities of countable nouns, which are objects or things that can be easily counted.



We have two eggs. That's **not enough**.

Indicates there are too few.



We have four eggs. That's **enough**.

"Enough" is the correct amount.



Don't use five eggs. That's **too many**.

Indicates more than enough.



We need four eggs.
Do we have **enough**?

"Enough" is used for questions.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

There are **enough** apples here.

I **don't** have **enough** shoes.

There **aren't** **enough** employees.

You have **too many** clothes.

75.3 "ENOUGH / TOO MUCH" WITH UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

"Enough," "not enough," and "too much" are used to talk about amounts of uncountable nouns, which are things that cannot easily be counted.



We need eight ounces of flour. Do we have **enough**?



not enough flour

Indicates too little.



enough flour

Indicates the correct amount.



too much flour

Indicates more than is needed or wanted.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

There is **enough** milk.

There **isn't** **enough** time.

I **don't** have **enough** energy.

There is **too much** food.

75.4 "A LOT OF" AND "LOTS OF"

"A lot of" and "lots of" are commonly used informally before uncountable nouns and plural countable nouns to indicate that there is a large quantity of something.

A lot of
Lots of } people play sports to keep fit.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

There was **a lot of** food at the event.



The charity received **lots of** donations.



The event raised **a lot of** money.



Lots of people enjoy charity events.



75.5 "LITTLE" FOR SMALL AMOUNTS

"Little" is used with uncountable nouns to say that there is not much of something in UK English. It emphasizes how small the amount is.

"A little" is used with uncountable nouns to mean "some." It emphasizes that the amount, though small, is enough.

little = not much

I have **little** money left. I can't afford to visit the wildlife park.



a little = some

I have **a little** money left. Should we visit the wildlife park?



"Little" can also be used as a pronoun to mean "not much."

Little can be done about the decreasing number of red squirrels.



Informally, "a (little) bit of" can be used instead of "a little."

There's **a little bit of** the park that we haven't seen yet.



75.6 "FEW" FOR SMALL NUMBERS

"Few" is used with plural countable nouns to say that there are not many of something. It emphasizes how small the number is.

few = not many

There are **few** rare birds here.
We probably won't see any.

"A few" is used with plural countable nouns to mean "some." It emphasizes that the number, though small, is enough.

a few = some

There are **a few** rare birds here.
We might see one.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

"Few" can also be used as a pronoun to mean "not many."

Few are willing to contribute to the upkeep of the national park.



"Very" can be used to stress that the number of something is even smaller.

I wanted to see an owl, but **very few** can be seen during the day.



75.7 "QUITE A FEW" AND "QUITE A BIT (OF)" FOR BIG QUANTITIES

The phrases "quite a bit of" and "quite a few" are understatements that actually mean "a lot" or "many."

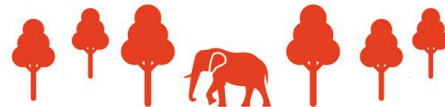
quite a few = many

The park is home to **quite a few** species.



quite a bit of = a lot of

There is **quite a bit of** open space for the animals.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Quite a few of the students in my class don't like History.



There are **quite a few** books that I'd like to read.



There's still **quite a bit of** snow on the ground.



She ate **quite a bit of** cake at her birthday party.



75.8 "MORE"

"More" is used to show that there is a greater quantity or amount of something. It is used with both countable and uncountable nouns.

I'm buying **more** cookies. 

"Cookies" is a countable noun.

We need **more** milk. 

"Milk" is an uncountable noun.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I like spending **more** time with my family.

Our new house has **more** space.

We raised **even more** money for charity.



"Even" can be added for emphasis.

More and more people are donating.


"More and more" shows that the amount is increasing over time.

75.9 "FEWER" AND "LESS"

"Fewer" and "less" are used to show that there is a smaller quantity or amount of something. "fewer" belongs with plural countable nouns and "less" with uncountable nouns.

Fewer people drive cars these days.  

"People" is a plural countable noun.

Traveling by bus or train uses **less** fuel. 

"Fuel" is an uncountable noun.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

There are **fewer** whales in the oceans nowadays.



We need to spend **less** money.



Fewer people enjoy gardening these days.



There is much **less** traffic today.



! COMMON MISTAKES "FEWER" AND "LESS"

It is important to remember the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns when using "fewer" and "less."



"Fewer" is only used with plural countable nouns.

I have **fewer** potatoes than I need. ✓

"Less" is only used with uncountable nouns.

I have **less** potatoes than I need. ✗

I have **fewer** flour than the recipe requires. ✗

I have **less** flour than I need. ✓



75.10 "MORE THAN," "LESS THAN," AND "FEWER THAN"

"More than" is used when talking about amounts or quantities of countable and uncountable nouns.

Lions eat **more than** 15 pounds of meat each day.



"Fewer than" is used for groups of people or things.

There are **fewer than** 3,500 tigers in the wild.



"Less than" is used when talking about amounts, distances, time, and money.

The wildlife park costs **less than** \$5 to visit.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

The committee holds meetings **more than** 5 times a month.



The charity survives with **fewer than** 20 volunteers.



There were **more than** 100 people at the event.



There are **fewer than** 50 tickets left for the charity concert.



Charity workers are paid on average **less than** \$10 an hour.



You can donate **less than** the recommended amount.

