

Some and any

Reminder → 110–121

A

Some

Before plural and uncountable nouns we sometimes use **some** or **zero article** (i.e. no article) with very little difference in meaning:

- 'Where were you last week?' 'I was visiting (**some**) friends.'
- Before serving, pour (**some**) yoghurt over the top.

With both **some** and **zero article** we are referring to particular people or things but in an indefinite way. When it is used in this way, **some** is usually pronounced /səm/.

We don't use **some** to make general statements about whole classes of things or people:

- Machinery** can be dangerous unless used properly.
- Babies** need a lot of attention.

B

Some is used before a number to mean 'approximately':

- Some** eighty per cent of all residents took part in the vote. (= approximately eighty per cent; beginning 'Eighty per cent ...' suggests a more precise figure)

When it is used in this way, **some** is usually pronounced /səm/.

C

When we can't say exactly which person or thing we are talking about because we don't know, can't remember, or want to emphasise that it is not important, we can use **some** instead of **a / an** with a singular noun. When it is used in this way, **some** is usually pronounced /səm/.

- He was interrupted twice by **some** troublemaker in the audience.

We use the phrase **some (thing) or other** in a similar way:

- I bought them from **some shop or other** in New Street. (*not ... from a shop or other ...*)

D

Any

We usually use **any** not **some** (and **anyone**, **anything**, etc. not **someone**, **something**, etc.) –

- ☆ in non-affirmative contexts; that is, lacking positive, affirmative meaning.
- ☆ to refer to non-specific, unspecified things.

For example, we generally use **any** in sentences with a negative meaning:

- There's *hardly* **any** sugar left.
- I closed the windows to *prevent* **any** flies getting in.
- It was *impossible* to see **anything** in the dark.
- We got to the airport *without* **any** difficulty.

Also when sentences include: **barely**, **never**, **rarely**, **scarcely**, **seldom** (= negative adverbs); **deny**, **fail**, **forbid**, **prohibit**, **refuse** (= negative verbs); **reluctant**, **unable**, **unlikely** (= negative adjectives)

However, we use **some** with these negative words–

- ☆ when **some** (pronounced /səm/) has the implication 'not all':
 - I talk to colleagues *before* I make **some** decisions, but I had to make this one on my own.
- ☆ when the basic meaning is positive:
 - Somebody** isn't telling the truth. (= There is some person [who isn't telling the truth])
- ☆ when we are talking about a particular but unspecified person or thing:
 - I was *reluctant* to repeat **something** so critical of Paul. (= a specific criticism)

E

We often use **any** in clauses that begin with **before**, and with comparisons:

- I cleared up the mess *before* **anyone** saw it. ('... before someone saw it' suggests that I have a particular person in mind who might see it)
- The material felt *softer than* **anything** she had ever touched before.

Exercises

48.1 If necessary, correct these sentences by writing **some** in an appropriate place or crossing it out. If the sentence is already correct, write ✓. (A & Reminder 110–114)

- 1 If you're going to the library, could you take back books that I've finished reading?
- 2 The price of some coffee is at an all-time low.
- 3 Tony knows more about some jazz than anyone I've ever met.
- 4 The door kept flying open in the wind so I tied it up with string.
- 5 Sports are dangerous.
- 6 I need to get some bread from the supermarket.
- 7 Money can't buy you some happiness.
- 8 Children are taller than expected at a given age.

48.2 Rewrite these news headlines as full sentences using **some** to mean 'approximately'. (B)

- 1 **250 people charged with assault following Molton riots**
Some 250 people have been charged with assault following the Molton riots.
- 2 **30% OF ALL CITY BUSES FOUND TO BE UNSAFE**
- 3 **Unexploded bomb found 5 miles from Newham centre**
- 4 **25% OF ELECTRICITY FROM WIND BY 2025**
- 5 **200 jobs to be lost at Encon steelworks**

48.3 Complete the sentences in any appropriate way using **some + singular noun** or **some + singular noun + or other**. (C)

- 1 I don't know where I got the information from. I must have heard it *on some radio programme (or other).*
- 2 I don't know where Jakub is. He's probably
- 3 I don't know where the book is. Maybe I lent it
- 4 I don't know where Zuzanna works. I think it's in
- 5 I don't know why Nika is still at work. Perhaps she's got to

48.4 Complete these sentences with **some, someone, something, any, anyone** or **anything**. Where both **some(one / thing)** or **any(one / thing)** are possible, write both and consider any difference in meaning. (D & E)

- 1 Elias worked hard at learning Japanese but failed to make real progress.
- 2 I was unable to eat of the food.
- 3 I always offer to help organise school concerts, but there is seldom for me to do.
- 4 Fiona Jones is I rarely see these days.
- 5 He denied that he had done wrong.
- 6 I always get to work before else.
- 7 The theatre is unlikely to have tickets left for tonight's performance.
- 8 Despite rowing as hard as we could, we had gone barely distance from the shore.
- 9 parents never seem to have time to sit down and talk to their children.
- 10 When I last lent my laptop out it got damaged, so I'm reluctant to lend it to else.