

## Much (of), many (of), a lot of, lots (of), etc.

Reminder → 138–142

A

In affirmative sentences we generally use **a lot of** and **lots (of)** rather than **much (of)** and **many (of)**, particularly in informal contexts. However, there are a number of exceptions –

- ☆ In formal contexts, such as academic writing, **much (of)** and **many (of)** are often preferred. We can also use phrases such as **a large / considerable / substantial amount of** (with uncountable nouns), or **a large / considerable / great / substantial number of** (with plural nouns):
  - Much** debate has been heard about Thornton's new book.
  - There could be **many** explanations for this.
  - Much of** her fiction describes women in unhappy marriages.
  - A large amount of** the food was inedible. (or **Much of ...**)
  - The book contains **a large number of** pictures, many in colour. (or ... **many ...**)
- ☆ In formal contexts we can use **much** and **many** as pronouns:
  - There is no guarantee she will recover. **Much** depends on how well she responds to treatment.
  - Many** (= many people) have argued that she is the finest poet of our generation.
  - Not once did I see a tiger in the jungle, although I heard **many**. (referring back to 'tiger(s)')
- ☆ We usually use **many** rather than **a lot of** or **lots of** with time expressions (**days, minutes, months, weeks, years**) and **number + of** (e.g. **thousands of voters, millions of pounds**):
  - We used to spend **many hours** driving to Melbourne and back.
  - He was the founder of a company now worth **many millions of pounds**.

B

We can use **many** following **the, my, its, his, her**, etc. and plural countable nouns:

- Among **the many unknowns** after the earthquake is the extent of damage to the foundations of buildings.
- The gallery is exhibiting some of **his many famous paintings of ships**.

We can use the phrase **many a** with a singular noun to talk about a repeated event or a large number of people or things:

- Many a pupil** at the school will be pleased that Latin is no longer compulsory.

C

To emphasise that we are talking about a large number we can use **a good / great many** with a plural noun:

- She has **a good / great many friends** in New Zealand.

To emphasise that we are talking about a large amount we can use **a good / great deal of** with a singular or uncountable noun:

- A good / great deal of** the exhibition was devoted to her recent work.

D

We use **far** (not 'much' or 'many') before **too many + a plural countable noun** or **too much + an uncountable noun**:

- Far too many students** failed the end-of-year maths exam. (not Much / Many too many ...)
- Far too much time** is wasted filling in forms. (not Much / Many too much time ...)

E

We often use **plenty of** instead of **a lot of** or **lots of** with uncountable and plural countable nouns. However, **plenty of** means 'enough, or more than enough' and is therefore not likely in certain contexts. Compare:

- We took **lots of / plenty of** food and drink on our walk through the hills. *and*
- Nina doesn't look well. She's lost **a lot of** weight. ('plenty of' is unlikely here)

# Exercises

**50.1** Make corrections or improvements to these extracts from conversations (1–3) and from academic writing (4–6). **A, C, D & E**

1 Lola's had many problems with her back for a lot of years. She's having an operation next week and she won't be back at work for a good deal of weeks afterwards.

2 A: There's bound to be much traffic on the way to the station. Perhaps we should leave now.

B: No, there's plenty time left, and at this time of day many people will already be at work.

3 Many think that hedgehogs are very rare nowadays, but when I was in Wales I saw many.

4 A lot have claimed that Professor Dowman's study on current attitudes to politics is flawed. One criticism is that much too many people questioned in the survey were under 18.

5 A lot of research has been conducted on the effects of diet on health, with a lot of studies focusing on the link between fat intake and heart disease. However, a lot remains to be done.

6 While it is true that a lot of thousands of jobs were lost with the decline of the northern coal and steel industries, a lot of advantages have also followed. Much too many cases of lung disease were recorded in the region, but with lower levels of pollution the number has declined. In addition, a great deal of hi-tech companies have moved in to take advantage of the newly available workforce.

**50.2** Complete the sentences with either **the / my / its / his / her many** or **many a / an** and one item from the box. **B**

coffee shops    expeditions    ~~German relatives~~    golf courses  
emails    ship    sunny afternoon    teacher

- 1 She went to stay in Munich with one of her many German relatives.
- 2 I spent ..... sitting on the terrace looking out over the hills.
- 3 ..... has been lost in the dangerous waters off the south coast of the island.
- 4 The area is most famous for ..... that attract players from all over the world.
- 5 Since the end of last year he has refused to speak to me on the phone or answer .....
- 6 Oliver Svensson accompanied Colonel Colombo on ..... to the Himalayas and the Andes.
- 7 ..... will be looking forward to the start of the school holidays.
- 8 I went into the first of ..... along New Street and ordered an espresso.

**50.3** If possible, complete these sentences using **plenty of**. If not, use **a lot of**. **E**

- 1 It will be very hot on the journey, so make sure you bring ..... drinking water.
- 2 ..... staff at the hospital have come down with a mysterious illness.
- 3 He didn't have ..... money, so he decided to catch the bus rather than take a taxi.
- 4 We were surprised when ..... students failed to attend the lecture.
- 5 I'm looking forward to a relaxing holiday, and I'm taking ..... books to read.