

Between and among

A As prepositions of *place* we use **between** with two or more people or things that we see as individual or separate, and we use **among** when we see the people or things as part of a group or mass. **Among** is only used with three or more people or things:

- She held the diamond **between** her thumb and forefinger.
- Zimbabwe is situated **between** Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east, Botswana to the west, and South Africa to the south.
- He stood **among** all his friends at the party and felt very happy.
- She eventually found her passport **among** the clothes in the drawer.

Note that **amongst** is sometimes used instead of **among**, but in more literary contexts.

B **Between** and **among** are not only used as prepositions of place. For example, we can use either to talk about something divided or shared between people:

- The money is to be divided **between / among** the towns in the area.
- The prize will be shared **between / among** the first six finishers in the race.

We also use **between** –

☆ to talk about comparisons and relationships:

- There should be a better *balance* on the committee **between** the various ethnic groups.
- They are wrong to claim that there is a *link* **between** unemployment and crime.

Also: **association, comparison, connection, contrast, correlation, difference, distinction, relationship**

☆ to talk about choices:

- I have to choose **between** the universities of Leeds, York and Manchester.
- He felt torn **between** his family and his friends.

☆ to talk about discussions or the results of discussions when we specify the two or more people or groups involved:

- There was a disagreement **between** Emma, Jade and Zoe.
- The treaty was signed **between** Great Britain and France.

☆ to say that people or things share an amount of something:

- Between** them, Will and Alice must earn about €100,000 a year.
- Last year the three companies built 30,000 houses **between** them.

We also use **among** –

☆ when we mean 'existing or happening in a particular group':

- The disease has now broken out **among** the hill tribes.
- Their music is still very popular **among** teenagers.

☆ when we mean 'included in a particular group':

- They are **among** the best hockey players in the world.
- Among** the capital cities of South America, Quito is the second highest.

C There are a number of common expressions using **between** and **among**:

- The concert features, **among others**, Karl Frisk and the Johnsons. (= other singers / groups are featured, too)
- I later found out that he had been a carpenter and a plumber, **among other things**. (= he had had other jobs, too)
- Between ourselves / Between you and me** (= keep this a secret), I don't think Jack is as honest as he should be.

Exercises

89.1 Underline the correct option. A

- 1 For a couple of days I've had a pain *between / among* my shoulder blades.
- 2 He couldn't find a microphone *between / among* all the recording equipment he had with him.
- 3 It would be easier to read if you put a line space *between / among* the paragraphs.
- 4 In the photograph Anna is standing *between / among* her parents.
- 5 The lost manuscript was discovered *between / among* the thousands of books in the cellar.
- 6 The buffet is towards the middle of the train *between / among* the first and second class sections.
- 7 She carried trays of drinks and food *between / among* the crowd of guests in the room.
- 8 I couldn't see Robbie *between / among* the audience, although he said he would be there.
- 9 Rebecca commutes *between / among* her flat in Paris and her office in Brussels.

89.2 Complete the sentences with *between* or *among* and the most likely words or phrases from the box. If you can use either, write *between / among*. B

amateur its clients my closest friends cooking
 intake of refined sugar the pupils his remaining relatives
 the striking dockers teenagers ~~us~~

- 1 I wasn't feeling very hungry, so Daniel and I shared a bowl of noodles *between us*.
- 2 I bought four bars of chocolate and divided them in the class.
- 3 The distinction and professional athletes is becoming less clear.
- 4 It has become fashionable to dye their hair in various colours.
- 5 When Malik died, his daughter inherited the house and the rest of his money was split
- 6 The advertising company is very successful, numbering most of the big banks
- 7 Researchers have found a striking correlation and arthritis.
- 8 Given a choice and washing up, I know which I'd prefer to do.
- 9 Luka and Ivan are, so I'll invite them to the wedding, of course.
- 10 Late last night the talks and their employers broke down.

89.3 Complete this email with *between* or *among*. A & B

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Hi Mum and Dad!

Rome must be (1) the most fascinating cities in the world. Yesterday we visited, (2) other places, the Foro Romano – the centre of ancient Rome – and the Vatican. There is such an incredible contrast (3) the old parts of the city built up to 2,000 years ago and the more recent parts. In the Vatican we climbed the long stairs to the top of St Peter's church. The view from the top must be (4) the most incredible over any city in the world. But (5) you and me, I'm a bit scared of heights and was glad to get back to ground level. Later we went to the Pantheon, an ancient Roman temple, which is (6) the Vatican and the Foro Romano. The Italian king Umberto I and the artist Raphael are (7) the people buried there. In the evening there was a bit of an argument (8) us over where we should eat – Jo wanted pizza, but I wanted to try some of the special local food. Eventually we found a place that did excellent pasta, (9) other things. The only problem then was choosing (10) the many different types!

Will be in touch again when I can.

Love, Keira