

## Much, many, little, few, a lot, plenty

### A

We use **much** and **little** with *uncountable* nouns:

**much** time   **much** luck   **little** energy   **little** money

We use **many** and **few** with *plural* nouns:

**many** friends   **many** people   **few** cars   **few** countries

### B

We use **a lot of / lots of / plenty of** with both uncountable and plural nouns:

**a lot of** luck   **lots of** time   **plenty of** money

**a lot of** friends   **lots of** people   **plenty of** ideas

**Plenty** = more than enough:

- There's no need to hurry. We've got **plenty of** time.

### C

**Much** is unusual in positive sentences (especially in spoken English). So we say:

- We didn't spend **much** money. (negative)

- Does he go out **much**? (question)

*but* ■ We spent a lot of money. (*not* We spent **much** money)

- He goes out a lot. (*not* He goes out **much**)

We use **many**, **a lot (of)**, and **lots of** in all kinds of sentences:

- Many people drive too fast.   *or*   A lot of / Lots of people drive too fast.

- Do you know **many** people?   *or*   Do you know a lot of / lots of people?

- He doesn't go out a lot.   *or*   He doesn't go out **much**.

### D

**Little** and **few** (*without a*) are negative ideas (= not much / not many):

- We had to make a quick decision. There was **little** time to think.

(= not much time; not enough time)

- Dave has **few** friends at the company now that Jason and Bruce have quit.

(= not many friends; not enough friends)

We often say **very little** and **very few**:

- There was **very little** time to think.

- Dave has **very few** friends at the company.

**A little** and **a few** are more positive. **A little** = some, or a small amount:

- Let's go and get something to drink. We've got **a little** time before the train leaves.

(**a little time** = some time; enough time to have a drink)

- "Do you speak English?" "A **little**." (so we can talk a bit)

**A few** = some, a small number:

- I enjoy my life here. I have **a few** friends, and we get together pretty often. (**a few** friends = not many, but enough to have a good time)

- "When was the last time you saw Claire?" "A **few** days ago." (= some days ago)

Compare:

- He spoke **little** English, so it was hard to communicate with him.

He spoke **a little** English, so we were able to communicate with him.

- She's lucky. She has **few** problems. (= not many problems)

Things are not going so well for her. She has **a few** problems. (= some problems)

Note that **only a little** and **only a few** have a negative meaning:

- We have to hurry. We **only** have a little time.

- The town was very small. There were **only a few** houses.

# Exercises

84.1 In some of these sentences *much* is incorrect or unnatural. Change *much* to *many* or *a lot (of)* where necessary.

1. We didn't spend much money. RIGHT
2. Sue drinks much tea. a lot of tea
3. Jim always puts much salt on his food. \_\_\_\_\_
4. We'll have to hurry. We haven't got much time. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did it cost much to fix the car? \_\_\_\_\_
6. It cost much to fix the car. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I don't know much people in this town. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I use the phone much at work. \_\_\_\_\_

84.2 Complete the sentences using *plenty (of)* + one of the following:

hotels money room things to wear time to learn

1. There's no need to hurry. We've got plenty of time.
2. He doesn't have any financial problems. He has \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Come and sit with us. There's \_\_\_\_\_.
4. She knows a lot, but she still has \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I'm sure we'll find a place to stay. There \_\_\_\_\_.
6. She doesn't need to buy a new dress for the party. She has \_\_\_\_\_.

84.3 Put in *much/many/few/little*.

1. He isn't very popular. He has very few friends.
2. Ann is very busy these days. She has very \_\_\_\_\_ free time.
3. Did you take \_\_\_\_\_ pictures when you were on vacation?
4. I'm not very busy today. I don't have \_\_\_\_\_ to do.
5. Most of the town is modern. There are \_\_\_\_\_ old buildings.
6. The weather has been very dry recently. We've had very \_\_\_\_\_ rain.

84.4 Put in *a* where necessary.

1. She's lucky. She has few problems. RIGHT
2. Things are not going so well for her. She has few problems. a few problems
3. Can you lend me few dollars? \_\_\_\_\_
4. I can't give you a decision yet. I need little time to think. \_\_\_\_\_
5. There was little traffic, so the trip didn't take very long. \_\_\_\_\_
6. It was a surprise that he won the match. Few people expected him to win. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I don't know much Spanish – only few words. \_\_\_\_\_

84.5 Put in *little / a little / few / a few*.

1. We have to hurry. We have little time.
2. Listen carefully. I'm going to give you \_\_\_\_\_ advice.
3. Do you mind if I ask you \_\_\_\_\_ questions?
4. This town is not a very interesting place to visit, so \_\_\_\_\_ tourists come here.
5. I don't think Jill would be a good teacher. She has \_\_\_\_\_ patience.
6. "Would you like cream in your coffee?" "Yes, please. \_\_\_\_\_"
7. This is a very boring place to live. There's \_\_\_\_\_ to do.
8. "Have you ever been to Paris?" "Yes, I've been there \_\_\_\_\_ times."