

quite, pretty, rather and fairly

A

Quite and **pretty** are similar in meaning (= less than 'very', but more than 'a little'):

- ☐ I'm surprised you haven't heard of her. She's **quite famous**. or She's **pretty famous**.
(= less than 'very famous', but more than 'a little famous')
- ☐ Anna lives **quite near** me, so we see each other **pretty often**.

Pretty is an informal word and is used mainly in spoken English.

Quite goes before **a/an**:

- ☐ We live in **quite an old house**. (*not* a quite old house)

Compare:

- ☐ Sarah has **quite a** good job.
Sarah has **a pretty** good job.

You can also use **quite** (but not **pretty**) in the following ways:

quite a/an + noun (without an adjective):

- ☐ I didn't expect to see them. It was **quite a surprise**. (= quite a big surprise)

quite a lot (of ...):

- ☐ There were **quite a lot of** guests at the wedding.

quite + verb, especially **like** and **enjoy**:

- ☐ I **quite like** tennis, but it's not my favourite sport.

B

Rather is similar to **quite** and **pretty**. We often use **rather** for negative ideas (things we think are not good):

- ☐ The weather isn't so good. It's **rather cloudy**.
- ☐ Paul is **rather shy**. He doesn't talk very much.

Quite is also possible in these examples.

When we use **rather** for positive ideas (**good/nice** etc.), it means 'unusually' or 'surprisingly':

- ☐ These oranges are **rather good**. Where did you get them?

C

Fairly is weaker than **quite/rather/pretty**. For example, if something is **fairly good**, it is not very good and it could be better:

- ☐ My room is **fairly big**, but I'd prefer a bigger one.
- ☐ We see each other **fairly often**, but not as often as we used to.

D

Quite also means 'completely'. For example:

- ☐ 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, **quite sure**.' (= completely sure)

Quite means 'completely' with a number of adjectives, especially:

sure	right	true	clear	different	incredible	amazing
certain	wrong	safe	obvious	unnecessary	extraordinary	impossible

- ☐ She was **quite different** from what I expected. (= completely different)
- ☐ Everything they said was **quite true**. (= completely true)

We also use **quite** (= completely) with some verbs. For example:

- ☐ I **quite agree** with you. (= I completely agree)

not quite = not completely:

- ☐ I **don't quite understand** what you mean.
- ☐ 'Are you ready yet?' '**Not quite**.' (= not completely)

Compare the two meanings of **quite**:

- ☐ The story is **quite interesting**. (= less than 'very interesting')
- ☐ The story is **quite true**. (= completely true)

Exercises

104.1 Complete the sentences using **quite ...**. Choose from:

famous hungry late noisy often old surprised

- I'm surprised you haven't heard of her. She's quite famous.
- I'm Is there anything to eat?
- We go to the cinema – maybe once a month.
- We live near a very busy road, so it's often
- I didn't expect Lisa to contact me. I was when she phoned.
- I went to bed last night, so I'm a bit tired this morning.
- I don't know exactly when this house was built, but it's

104.2 Put the words in the right order to complete the sentences.

- The weather was better than we had expected.
It was quite a nice day (a / nice / quite / day).
- Tom likes to sing.
He has (voice / quite / good / a).
- The bus stop wasn't near the hotel.
We had to walk (quite / way / a / long).
- It's not so warm today.
There's (a / wind / cold / pretty).
- The roads were busy.
There was (lot / traffic / a / of / quite).
- I'm tired.
I've had (pretty / day / a / busy).
- Sarah hasn't been working here long.
She (fairly / started / recently).

104.3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use **rather** + adjective.

- The weather isn't so good. It's rather cloudy
- I enjoyed the film, but it was
- Chris went away without telling anybody, which was
- Lucy doesn't like having to wait. Sometimes she's
- They have some lovely things in this shop, but it's

104.4 What does **quite** mean in these sentences? Tick (✓) the right meaning.

- | | <i>more than 'a little', less than 'very' (Section A)</i> | <i>'completely' (Section D)</i> |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 It's <u>quite cold</u> . You need a coat. | ✓ | |
| 2 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, <u>quite sure</u> .' | | ✓ |
| 3 Anna's English is <u>quite good</u> . | | |
| 4 I couldn't believe it. It was <u>quite incredible</u> . | | |
| 5 My bedroom is <u>quite big</u> . | | |
| 6 I'm <u>quite tired</u> . I think I'll go to bed. | | |
| 7 I <u>quite agree</u> with you. | | |

104.5 Complete these sentences using **quite ...**. Choose from:different impossible right safe sure ~~true~~

- I didn't believe her at first, but in fact what she said was quite true.
- You won't fall. The ladder is
- I'm afraid I can't do what you ask. It's
- I completely agree with you. You are
- You can't compare the two things. They are
- I think I saw them go out, but I'm not