

much, many, little, few, a lot, plenty

A

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

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

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

many friends **many** people **few** cars **few** children

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.
- ☐ There's **plenty to do** in this town.

B

Much is unusual in positive sentences (especially in spoken English). Compare:

- ☐ We **didn't** spend **much** money. *but* We **spent a lot of** money.
- ☐ **Do you see** David **much**? *but* I **see** David **a lot**.

But we use **too much** / **so much** / **as much** in positive sentences:

- ☐ We **spent too much** money.

We use **many** and **a lot of** in all kinds of sentences:

- ☐ **Many** people drive too fast. *or* **A lot of** people drive too fast.
- ☐ Do you know **many** people? *or* Do you know **a lot of** people?
- ☐ There aren't **many** tourists here. *or* There aren't **a lot of** tourists here.

Note that we say **many years** / **many weeks** / **many days**:

- ☐ We've lived here for **many years**. (*not usually* a lot of years)

C

little = not much, **few** = not many:

- ☐ Gary is very busy with his job. He has **little time** for other things.
(= not much time, less time than he would like)
- ☐ Vicky doesn't like living in London. She has **few friends** there.
(= not many friends, not as many as she would like)

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

- ☐ Gary has **very little time** for other things.
- ☐ Vicky has **very few friends** in London.

D

a little = some, a small amount:

- ☐ Let's go and have coffee. We have **a little** time before the train leaves.
(**a little time** = some time, enough time to have a coffee)
- ☐ '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 meet quite often.
(**a few friends** = not many, but enough to have a good time)
- ☐ 'When was the last time you saw Clare?' '**A few days** ago.' (= 3 or 4 days ago)

E

Compare **little** and **a little**, **few** and **a few**:

- ☐ He spoke **little English**, so it was difficult 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)

We say **only a little** (*not only little*) and **only a few** (*not only few*):

- ☐ Hurry! We **only** have **a little** time. (= some, but not much time)
- ☐ The village was small. There were **only a few** houses. (= some but not many houses)

Exercises

87.1 In some of these sentences **much** is incorrect or unnatural. Change **much** to **many** or **a lot (of)** where necessary. Write '**OK**' if the sentence is correct.

- 1 We didn't eat much. OK
- 2 My mother drinks much tea. My mother drinks a lot of tea.
- 3 Be quick. We don't have much time.
- 4 It cost much to repair the car.
- 5 Did it cost much to repair the car?
- 6 You have much luggage. Let me help you.
- 7 There wasn't much traffic this morning.
- 8 I don't know much people in this town.
- 9 Do you eat much fruit?
- 10 Mike likes travelling. He travels much.

87.2 Complete the sentences using **plenty of ...** or **plenty to ...**. Choose from:

hotels learn money room see **time**

- 1 There's no need to hurry. There's plenty of time.
- 2 He has no financial problems. He has
- 3 Come and sit with us. There's
- 4 She knows a lot, but she still has
- 5 It's an interesting town to visit. There
- 6 I'm sure we'll find somewhere to stay.

87.3 Put in **much/many/little/few** (one word only).

- 1 She isn't popular. She has few friends.
- 2 Anna is very busy these days. She has free time.
- 3 Did you take pictures at the wedding?
- 4 This is a modern city. There are old buildings.
- 5 The weather has been very dry recently. We've had rain.
- 6 I don't know London well. I haven't been there for years.
- 7 The two cars are similar. There is difference between them.
- 8 I'm not very busy today. I don't have to do.
- 9 It's a wonderful place to live. There are better places to be.

87.4 Which is right?

- 1 She's lucky. She has few problems / ~~a few problems~~. (few problems is correct)
- 2 Can you lend me few dollars / a few dollars?
- 3 It was the middle of the night, so there was little traffic / a little traffic.
- 4 They got married few years ago / a few years ago.
- 5 I can't give you a decision yet. I need little time / a little time to think.
- 6 I don't know much Russian – only few words / only a few words.
- 7 It was a surprise that he won the game. Few people / A few people expected him to win.

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

- 1 Gary is very busy with his job. He has little time for other things.
- 2 Listen carefully. I'm going to give you advice.
- 3 Do you mind if I ask you questions?
- 4 It's not a very interesting place, so tourists visit.
- 5 I don't think Amy would be a good teacher. She has patience.
- 6 'Would you like milk in your coffee?' 'Yes,, please.'
- 7 This is a boring place to live. There's to do.
- 8 I know Hong Kong quite well. I've been there times.
- 9 There were only people at the meeting.
- 10 'Did you do all this work on your own?' 'No, I had help from my friends.'