

Unit 108

Quite and rather

a **Quite** = less than 'very' but more than 'a little':

- I'm surprised you haven't heard of him. He's **quite famous**. (= less than very famous but more than a little famous)
- It's **quite cold**. You'd better wear your coat.
- Tom lives **quite near** me, so we see each other **quite often**.

Quite goes before **a/an**:

quite a nice day **quite an** old house **quite a** long way

We also use **quite** with some verbs, especially **like** and **enjoy**:

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

For another meaning of **quite** see section **c**.

b **Rather** is similar to **quite** but we use **rather** mainly with negative words and negative ideas:

- It's **rather cold**, so you'd better wear your coat.
- 'What was the examination like?' '**Rather difficult**, I'm afraid'.
- Let's get a taxi. It's **rather a long way** to walk.

Quite is also possible in these examples.

We often use **quite** with a *positive* idea and **rather** with a *negative* idea:

- She is **quite intelligent** but **rather lazy**.

When we use **rather** with *positive* words (*nice/interesting* etc.), it means 'unusually' or 'surprisingly'. For example: **rather nice** = unusually nice/surprisingly nice / nicer than expected:

- These oranges are **rather nice**. Where did you get them?
- Ann didn't like the book but I thought it was **rather interesting**. (= more interesting than expected).

Rather can go before or after **a/an**:

a rather interesting book *or* **rather an** interesting book

c **Quite** can also mean 'completely'. For example:

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

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

sure right true unnecessary different amazing
certain wrong safe extraordinary impossible amazed

- 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:

- I **quite agree** with you. (= I completely agree)
- They **haven't quite finished** their dinner yet.
- I **don't quite understand** what you mean.

'unusually' or 'surprisingly'. For example: **rather nice** = unusually nice/surprisingly nice / nicer than expected:

