

Unit 86 Much, many, little, few, a lot, plenty

a Much many few little

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 A lot (of) lots (of) plenty (of)

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

a lot of luck **lots of** time **plenty of** money
a lot of people **lots of** books **plenty of** ideas

Plenty = more than enough:

- 'Have some more to eat.' 'No, thank you. I've had **plenty**.'
- There's no need to hurry. We've got **plenty of time**.

c We use **much** and **many** mainly in negative sentences and questions:

- We **didn't** spend **much** money.
- Have you got **many** friends?

In positive sentences it is usually better to use **a lot (of)**. **Much** is especially unusual in positive sentences:

- We spent **a lot of** money. (*not* 'we spent much money')
- There has been **a lot of** rain recently. (*not* 'much rain')

But we use **too much** and **so much** in positive sentences:

- I can't drink this tea. There's **too much** sugar in it.

d Little / a little few / a few

Little and **few** (without **a**) are negative ideas

- Hurry up! We've got **little** time. (= not much, not enough time)
- He's not popular. He has **few** friends. (= not many, not enough friends)

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

- We've got **very little** time.
- He has **very few** friends.

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

- Let's go and have a drink. We've got **a little** time before the train leaves. (= some time, enough time to have a drink)
- 'Have you got any money?' 'Yes, **a little**. Do you want to borrow some?' (a little = not much but enough for you to borrow some)
- 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 did you last see Tom?' '**A few** days ago.' (= some days ago)

But '**only a little**' and '**only a few**' have a negative meaning:

- Hurry up! We've **only** got **a little** time.
- The village was very small. There were **only a few** houses.

- I can't drink this tea. There's **too much** sugar in it.

