

12 much, many, a lot of, (a) little, (a) few



1 much, many, a lot of (lots of)

We use *much*, *many* and *a lot of* to talk about a large amount; we don't know the exact amount.

- We usually use *much* and *many* in negative sentences and questions:
 - + UNCOUNTABLE NOUN *We haven't got much water.*
 - + COUNTABLE NOUN *There aren't many cans of cola.*
- We use *a lot of* or *lots of* in positive and negative sentences and questions:
 - We've got a lot of orange juice.*
 - Hurry up! We haven't got a lot of time.*
 - Were there lots of people at the swimming pool?*

We can use these words without a noun, when it is clear what we are talking about:

I've got some money with me but not much. *I've got a lot to do today.* (~~*a lot of to do*~~)

FORMALITY CHECK *Much* and *many* in positive sentences are formal. We prefer *a lot of* or *lots of* for informal use:

Many of the experiments produced useful results. (formal)

Come on. We've got a lot of work to do. (informal)

2 too much, too many, not enough

Too much and *too many* have a negative meaning. They mean 'more than we want':

We've got too many pizzas for only three people. *We can't walk here – there's too much snow.*

Not enough is the opposite of *too much/many*. It means 'less/fewer than we want':

We haven't got enough cola for the children. *We didn't have enough people to play football.*

3 (a) little, (a) few

We use *a little* instead of *some* to talk about a small amount; we use *a few* instead of *some* to talk about a small number; we don't know the exact amount or number:

+ UNCOUNTABLE NOUN *Add a little butter to the potatoes.*

+ COUNTABLE NOUN *There are a few good restaurants near here.*

When we use *little* (without *a*), it means 'not much/not enough': *You will have little difficulty in finding my house.* *There's little hope of finishing this today.*

When we use *few* (without *a*), it means 'not many/not enough': *Few tourists come to the island.* *There are few good hotels near here.*

FORMALITY CHECK *Little* and *few* can sound quite formal on their own. In everyday English, we prefer to use *very little/very few* or *not much/not many*:

There are very few good restaurants near here. *There aren't many good restaurants near here.*