

Academic Writing in English Quantifiers

Realised by: Dr Omar BEHADADA

Licence 3rd year

Academic Year: 2019-2020, 2nd Semestre

Like articles...

- ▶ **quantifiers** are words that precede and modify nouns
- ▶ They tell us how **many** or how **much**.
- ▶ Selecting the correct quantifier depends on your understanding the distinction between Countable and Non-Countable Nouns

The following quantifiers will work with countable nouns:

- ▶ many trees
- ▶ a few trees
- ▶ few trees
- ▶ several trees
- ▶ a couple of trees
- ▶ none of the trees
- ▶ each tree

The following quantifiers will work with non-countable nouns:

- ▶ **not much dancing**
- ▶ **a little dancing**
- ▶ **little dancing**
- ▶ **a bit of dancing**
- ▶ **a good deal of dancing**
- ▶ **a great deal of dancing**
- ▶ **no dancing**

The following quantifiers will work with both countable and non-countable nouns:

- ▶ **all of the trees/dancing**
- ▶ **some trees/dancing**
- ▶ **most of the trees/dancing**
- ▶ **enough trees/dancing**
- ▶ **a lot of trees/dancing**
- ▶ **lots of trees/dancing**
- ▶ **plenty of trees/dancing**
- ▶ **a lack of trees/dancing**

Be careful!

- ▶ In formal academic writing, it is usually better to use *many* and *much* rather than phrases such as *a lot of*, *lots of* and *plenty of*:
- ▶ *Much of what we thought we knew has now been disproven.*
Many consider the theory to be outdated.

‘Little’ and ‘a little’...

- ▶ There is an important difference between "a little" and "little" (used with non-count words):
- ▶ If I say that Jim has a little experience in management that means that although Jim is no great expert he does have some experience and that experience might well be enough for our purposes.
- ▶ If I say that Jim has little experience in management that means that he doesn't have enough experience.

‘Few’ and ‘a few’...

- ▶ If I say that Charlie owns a few books on Latin American literature that means that he has some books – not a lot of books, but **probably enough** for our purposes.
- ▶ If I say that Charlie owns few books on Latin American literature, that means he **doesn't have enough** for our purposes.

Much...

- ▶ Unless it is combined with *of*, the quantifier "much" is reserved for **questions** and **negative** statements:
- ▶ Much of the snow has already melted.
- ▶ How much snow fell yesterday? Not much.

Most...

- ▶ the quantifier "most of the" must include the definite article *the* when it modifies a **specific noun**, whether it's a countable or a non-countable noun:
- ▶ "most of the instructors at this college have a doctorate"; "most of the water has evaporated."

- ▶ With a general plural noun, however (when you are *not* referring to a specific entity), the "of the" is dropped:
- ▶ Most colleges have their own admissions policy.
- ▶ Most students apply to several colleges.

‘Each’ and ‘Every’...

- ▶ We use **each** and **every** to talk about all the countable nouns in a group:

*I love every movie that Tom Cruise has made.
I wrote each composition I had to do very carefully.*

- ▶ Verbs that follow are singular: *Every apple costs 50 cents.*

- ▶ With expressions such as "nearly" and "almost", we use **every**.
- ▶ *Nearly every plane was delayed due to the snow and high winds. Virtually everyone in the classroom was confused.*
- ▶ We also use **every** when talking about a **large group** with an indefinite number in it: *Every homeowner must have home insurance.* (not "each")
- ▶ When we are talking about frequency, how often something happens: *I go to the dentist every three months.*

- ▶ We use **each** when it's clear we are referring to a pair of things: *I had a baby in each arm.*
Each twin had long black hair.

Differences....

- ▶ **Compare:**
- ▶ *I read every book with great attention.*
I read each book with great attention.
- ▶ The first sentence has a meaning of "all the books" whereas we are emphasising in the second sentence how much attention **each single book** was given.

Remarques:

Be careful to not confuse the quantifiers “few” with “a few”; they have opposite meanings. The first is negative, while the second is positive in meaning.

*This study has identified **few** new areas of research (= almost none)*

*This study has successfully identified **a few** new areas of research. (= several)*