

# 35 Few or little?

The words used to describe quantities vary according to a number of factors, including whether you are talking about something countable or uncountable.

 **New language** "Few," "little," "fewer," "less"

 **Aa Vocabulary** Nature and environment

 **New skill** Describing quantities

## 35.1 KEY LANGUAGE "FEW" FOR SMALL NUMBERS

Use "few" with a plural countable noun to say that there are not many of something. It emphasizes how small the number is. You use "a few" to mean "some." It emphasizes that the number, though small, is enough.

**few = not many**

**There are **few** rare birds here.  
We probably won't see any.**



**a few = some**

**There are **a few** rare birds here.  
We might see one.**



## 35.2 KEY LANGUAGE "LITTLE" FOR SMALL AMOUNTS

Use "little" with an uncountable noun to say that there is not much of something. It emphasizes how small the amount is. You use "a little" to mean "some." It emphasizes that the amount, though small, is enough.

**TIP**

You can add "very" to "few" and "little" to mean "almost none."



**little = not much**

**I have **little** money left. I can't afford to visit the wildlife park.**



**a little = some**

**I have **a little** money left. Should we visit the wildlife park?**



## 35.3 OTHER WAYS TO USE "LITTLE" AND "FEW" FOR SMALL QUANTITIES

Informally, you can use "a (little) bit of" instead of "a little."

**There's **a little bit of** the park that we haven't seen yet.**

"Little" and "few" can also be used as pronouns to mean "not much / many."

**Little can be done when **few** are willing to contribute.**





### 35.4 CROSS OUT THE INCORRECT WORDS IN EACH SENTENCE



I'm so excited. I've got ~~few~~ / **a few** hours to explore the city tonight.



1 I'm afraid we have **little** / **a little** time to catch the train. We must hurry.



2 That cake is delicious. I'll have **little** / **a little** bit more.



3 Sadly, there are **few** / **a few** examples of this quality craftsmanship left.



4 Great! We have **little** / **a little** spare money. Should we go out for dinner?



5 Wow! Look at all these monkeys! I think there are **few** / **a few** different species here.



6 Unfortunately, I have **few** / **a few** friends. It's quite lonely here.



### 35.5 LOOK AT THE PICTURES AND FILL IN THE GAPS USING “(A) FEW” OR “(A) LITTLE”



There is little water left in the bottle. I'm so thirsty!



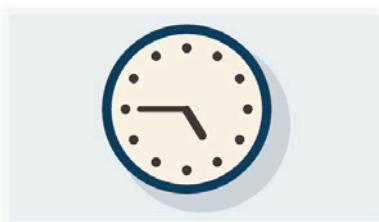
1 Great! There are                    magazines to choose from.



2 Sadly, there are                    fish in my aquarium.



3 There is very                    cake left, I'm afraid.



4 It should be OK. We have                    time left.



5 The café is closing soon. There are so                    customers.



## 35.6 KEY LANGUAGE “QUITE A FEW” AND “QUITE A BIT (OF)” FOR BIG QUANTITIES

The phrases “quite a bit of” and “quite a few” are understatements that actually mean “a lot” or “many.”

quite a few = many

The park has been open for quite a few years.

quite a bit of = a lot of

They collected quite a bit of money for charity.



## 35.7 FILL IN THE GAPS USING “(A) FEW” AND “(A) LITTLE”

Ninety-year-old Ken Wilson has finally decided to have a little time off after volunteering at his local wildlife park for 30 years. Ken started volunteering            years after he retired from teaching. He says, “I started making coffee for people in the little visitor center, but I’ve had quite            different roles since then.”



Ken has been a guide, he’s surveyed butterflies, and he even managed to get his hands dirty quite            times clearing up litter. What does he like so much about the park? “Well, there are            green places left like this in big cities. For            or no money, a family can explore all day and learn            about local wildlife. It’s            bit of calm in a busy world.”



What will he do now? “I’d like quite            days sitting in the park doing nothing.” After three decades looking after the wildlife, it’s time for Ken to take            break.



## 35.8 KEY LANGUAGE “FEWER” AND “LESS”

Confusion between “less” and “fewer” is very common. Remember to use “less” with uncountable nouns and “fewer” with plural countable nouns.

“Issues” is a plural countable noun.



**There are **fewer** issues with electric cars these days.**

**It would be great to use **less** fuel.**

“Fuel” is an uncountable noun.



## 35.9 FURTHER EXAMPLES “FEWER” AND “LESS”



**There are **fewer** whales in the oceans nowadays.**



**Fewer** people enjoy gardening these days.



**We need to spend **less** money.**

“Money” is uncountable, but currencies like “dollars” are countable.



**There is much **less** traffic today.**



## 35.10 MATCH THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SENTENCES TO THE CORRECT ENDINGS

People are spending much **less**

volunteers than last year.

1 Protesters have demanded **fewer**

wildlife near big factory sites.

2 The charity has **fewer**

money on organic food than expected.

3 The new light bulbs use **far less**

electricity than the old ones.

4 Unsurprisingly, there is **much less**

pollution in the capital city.

5 Since the new traffic laws, there is a **lot less**

harmful emissions by 2025.



### 35.11 KEY LANGUAGE “FEWER THAN” AND “LESS THAN”

Use “less than” when talking about amounts, distances, time, and money. Use “fewer than” for groups of people or things.



There are **fewer than** 3,500 tigers in the wild.



Baby elephants weigh **less than** 300 pounds.



### 35.12 FURTHER EXAMPLES “FEWER THAN” AND “LESS THAN”

The charity survives with **fewer than** 20 volunteers.

Charity workers are paid **less than** \$10 an hour.

There are **fewer than** 50 tickets left for the charity concert.

You can donate **less than** the recommended amount.



### 35.13 LISTEN TO THE AUDIO AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS



A local radio news station is reporting about an environmental campaigner’s recent success.

Environmental campaigner Rachel Roberts is 70 years old.

True  False

1 The proposal was to build houses on the site of the lake.

True  False

2 Rachel’s family used to have family picnics near Lake Lucid.

True  False

3 There were only modern pictures at the photography exhibition.

True  False

4 After 25 days, the exhibition had raised just under \$3,000.

True  False

5 People have come to visit the lake from other countries.

True  False

6 The plans for the bypass are delayed, but are still going ahead.

True  False



## 35.14 FILL IN THE GAPS IN THE SUMMARY OF 35.13, USING THE PHRASES IN THE PANEL

Few people would have believed the government would change their minds.

- 1 Rachel also had the help of \_\_\_\_\_ friends during her campaign.
- 2 Rachel knew that \_\_\_\_\_ people held the same opinion as her.
- 3 The area is home to \_\_\_\_\_ 500 plant and animal species.
- 4 The photography exhibition raised \$25,000 in \_\_\_\_\_ a week.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ people sent messages of support via social media sites.
- 6 Making Lake Lucid a popular tourist site will only take \_\_\_\_\_ years.



Few

a few

more than

quite a few

less than

Quite a few

a few



### 35 CHECKLIST

"Few," "little," "fewer," "less"

Nature and environment

Describing quantities

### REVIEW THE ENGLISH YOU HAVE LEARNED IN UNITS 32–35

NEW LANGUAGE	SAMPLE SENTENCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	UNIT
THE THIRD CONDITIONAL	If we had left earlier, we would have caught the train.	<input type="checkbox"/>	32.1
"I WISH" AND "IF ONLY"	I wish I knew how to ski. If only I'd charged the battery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	32.12, 32.13
"SHOULD HAVE" AND "OUGHT TO HAVE"	This bill is so big, I should have used less electricity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	33.1
DEPENDENT PREPOSITIONS	I am late for my meeting!	<input type="checkbox"/>	34.1, 34.4
"FEW" AND "LITTLE"	There are few rare birds here. I have little money left.	<input type="checkbox"/>	35.1, 35.2
"FEWER" AND "LESS"	There are fewer issues with electric cars. It would be great to use less fuel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	35.8