

Few, A Few, Little, A Little, Several, Most, Hardly Any, None, Plenty Of

B1 English Worksheet – Lesson 1: Precision and Tone in Quantity

Language Focus

At B1, quantifiers become more nuanced: some carry a positive or negative tone, and word choice depends on whether the noun is countable or uncountable.

few	Countable, negative – not enough	<i>Few local businesses were willing to invest in the new project.</i>
a few	Countable, positive – a small number, enough	<i>A few volunteers stayed behind to help clean up.</i>
little	Uncountable, negative – not enough	<i>There is little evidence to support this theory.</i>
a little	Uncountable, positive – a small amount, enough	<i>We still have a little time to prepare before the deadline.</i>
several	Countable, a number of, neutral tone	<i>Several council members raised concerns about the proposal.</i>
most (of)	The majority	<i>Most of the students passed the final exam.</i>
hardly any	Countable/uncountable, almost none, emphatic	<i>There was hardly any interest in the community meeting.</i>
none (of)	Zero, a complete negative	<i>None of the applicants had the required qualifications.</i>
plenty of	A large, more than sufficient amount	<i>We have plenty of time before the train departs.</i>

Key contrast: "few / little" sound negative (not enough), while "a few / a little" sound positive (enough) – even when the actual quantity is similar.

Reading: A Difficult Time for the Local Paper

Read the email below, then complete Exercise 1.

Subject: Difficult Decisions Ahead

Dear Team,

I wanted to update you on the situation at the paper before Friday's meeting. As most of you already know, our advertisers have been leaving steadily over the past year, and although we've tried several strategies to attract new sponsors, hardly any of them have shown real interest. We currently have few subscribers under the age of thirty, which is a serious long-term problem, and there is little we can do to reverse this trend quickly.

On a more positive note, we still have plenty of loyal readers in the over-fifty age group, and several local businesses have expressed interest in advertising in our weekend edition. Unfortunately, none of our current investors are willing to provide additional funding at this stage, so we need to think creatively about how to survive the next six months.

I know this is worrying news, but I have a little hope that if we work together, we can find a way through this. Let's discuss it properly on Friday.

Best,
Maria

1. Odd One Out

In each set, three sentences use the quantifier logically. One doesn't make sense – circle it.

Set 1:

- a) Few people attended the meeting, which was disappointing.
- b) A few colleagues offered to help with the project.
- c) Few volunteers turned up, so the event went smoothly.
- d) There were few solutions to the funding crisis.

Set 2:

- a) There is little chance of the project succeeding, so we should prepare for failure.
- b) We have a little money left, which should be enough to cover the basics.
- c) There was little support for the new policy, and it passed easily.
- d) We found a little comfort in knowing that others were in the same situation.

Set 3:

- a) Several employees complained about the new schedule.
- b) Several proposals were rejected by the committee.
- c) Several people came to the party, but the room felt completely empty.
- d) Several newspapers reported on the scandal.

Set 4:

- a) There was hardly any food left by the time we arrived.
- b) Hardly any tickets remained for the concert.
- c) There was hardly any interest in the survey, so we received hundreds of responses.
- d) Hardly any students failed the exam this year, which was reassuring.

Set 5:

- a) None of the candidates met the requirements, so the position remains vacant.
- b) Most of the staff agreed with the new policy.
- c) None of the members voted against the proposal, but it was rejected anyway.
- d) Most of the equipment was damaged in the storm.

2. Multiple Choice

Context: a local election campaign

1. ___ of the candidates have released their full policy platforms yet, which is unusual this close to the election.
Few / A few
2. Fortunately, ___ dedicated volunteers have agreed to help with canvassing over the weekend.
few / a few
3. There is ___ chance of the smaller party winning a seat this year.
little / a little
4. Despite the setback, the campaign team still has ___ optimism about the final result.
little / a little
5. ___ local newspapers have agreed to cover the debate live.
Several / Hardly any
6. ___ of the polling stations reported any major issues on election day.
Hardly any / Most

3. Matching

Context: university research funding

Draw a line to match each sentence to its meaning.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Several universities have applied for the same research grant. | <i>More than enough resources</i> |
| 2. There is little funding available for humanities departments this year. | <i>The majority of the money</i> |
| 3. Most of the funding went to medical research projects. | <i>A number of institutions - more than just one or two</i> |
| 4. Hardly any applications were successful in the first round. | <i>Almost none succeeded</i> |
| 5. The department still has plenty of resources for smaller projects. | <i>Almost no money - a serious shortage</i> |

4. Gap Fill

Context: a small family farm

Complete this passage with the correct quantifier for each gap.

Running a small farm has become increasingly difficult in recent years. _____ of the young people in the area have shown any interest in taking over family farms, preferring instead to move to the city for work. We have _____ financial support from the government, and _____ local buyers are willing to pay a fair price for organic produce anymore. Despite these challenges, we still have _____ hope that things will improve, especially since _____ small farms nearby have started working together to share resources and reduce costs.

Word bank: hardly any / most / several / little / a little / few / a few / none / plenty of

5. Error Identification

Context: a struggling startup

Each sentence has one wrong quantifier. Underline it and explain why it's wrong.

1. The startup has few funding left, so they may need to close soon.
2. There are little investors interested in early-stage companies this year.
3. We have a few confidence in this new strategy working.
4. The company has plenty of cash reserves, so we're worried about running out of money soon.
5. There is hardly any excitement about the product launch, so the whole team is thrilled.

6. Sentence Reordering

Context: charity shop volunteers

These lines of a conversation are in the wrong order. Number them 1-5 to rebuild it correctly.

_____ Maybe we should send a reminder, since we have plenty of shifts still unfilled.

_____ That's strange, since several people said they were free that day.

_____ Have you got a few minutes to talk about the volunteer schedule?

_____ Sure, I have a little time before my shift starts.

_____ Great. We have hardly any volunteers signed up for Saturday morning.

7. Complete the Conversation

Context: a sports club committee meeting

Complete with: few, a few, little, a little, several, most, hardly any, none, plenty of.

Chair: How many new members have we had this year?

Treasurer: _____ - only three in total, which is a real concern.

Chair: I'm afraid there's _____ chance of improving this before next year.

Treasurer: Well, there is _____ cause for optimism - the new sports hall might attract some new members.

Chair: _____ committee members have suggested a membership drive in September.

Treasurer: Good. _____ of our current budget is allocated for marketing though, so we'll need extra funding.

Chair: Let's ask the council for support. We still have _____ time before the AGM to prepare a proposal.

Treasurer: Agreed. _____ of the committee will need to attend the planning session next week.

1. Odd One Out – Answers

Set 1: **c)**

“Few volunteers” (negative) contradicts “went smoothly” (positive outcome).

Set 2: **c)**

“Little support” (negative) contradicts “passed easily” (positive outcome).

Set 3: **c)**

“Several people” (a noticeable number) contradicts a “completely empty” room.

Set 4: **c)**

“Hardly any interest” (almost none) contradicts “hundreds of responses”.

Set 5: **c)**

If none voted against, the proposal logically should not have been rejected.

2. Multiple Choice - Answers

1. ___ of the candidates have released their full policy platforms yet. **Few**
2. Fortunately, ___ dedicated volunteers have agreed to help. **a few**
3. There is ___ chance of the smaller party winning a seat. **little**
4. The campaign team still has ___ optimism about the result. **a little**
5. ___ local newspapers have agreed to cover the debate live. **Several**
6. ___ of the polling stations reported any major issues. **Hardly any**

3. Matching - Answers

1. Several universities have applied for the same research grant.
A number of institutions - more than one or two
2. There is little funding available for humanities departments this year.
Almost no money - a serious shortage
3. Most of the funding went to medical research projects.
The majority of the money
4. Hardly any applications were successful in the first round.
Almost none succeeded
5. The department still has plenty of resources for smaller projects.
More than enough resources

4. Gap Fill - Answers (in order)

1. Blank 1	Hardly any
2. Blank 2	little
3. Blank 3	few
4. Blank 4	a little
5. Blank 5	several

5. Error Identification - Answers

1. The startup has few funding left...
Fix: few → little - Countable word used with an uncountable noun ("funding")
2. There are little investors interested...
Fix: little → few - Uncountable word used with a countable noun ("investors")
3. We have a few confidence in this strategy...
Fix: a few → a little - Countable word used with an uncountable noun ("confidence")
4. The company has plenty of cash reserves, so we're worried...
Fix: plenty of → hardly any - Positive meaning used, but context is negative (worried about running out)
5. There is hardly any excitement..., so the whole team is thrilled.
Fix: hardly any → plenty of - Negative meaning used, but context is positive (thrilled)

6. Sentence Reordering - Answers

1. Have you got a few minutes to talk about the volunteer schedule?
2. Sure, I have a little time before my shift starts.
3. Great. We have hardly any volunteers signed up for Saturday morning.
4. That's strange, since several people said they were free that day.
5. Maybe we should send a reminder, since we have plenty of shifts still unfilled.

7. Complete the Conversation - Answers

Treasurer:	Few - only three in total, which is a real concern.	Few
Chair:	I'm afraid there's little chance of improving this.	little
Treasurer:	There is a little cause for optimism.	a little
Chair:	Several committee members have suggested a drive.	Several
Treasurer:	Hardly any of our budget is allocated for marketing.	Hardly any
Chair:	We still have plenty of time before the AGM.	plenty of
Treasurer:	Most of the committee will need to attend.	Most