

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

B1 English Worksheet – Lesson 2: 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 Small Museum in Difficulty

Read the email below, then complete Exercise 1.

Subject: Visitor Numbers and Next Steps

Dear Trustees,

I wanted to share an update ahead of next week's board meeting. As most of you are aware, our visitor numbers have been falling steadily since the new exhibition space opened elsewhere in town, and although we've tried several new initiatives to attract families, hardly any of them have had a noticeable effect. We currently have few school groups booking visits this term, which is worrying given how important that income usually is, and there is little we can do about it until the new term begins.

On a brighter note, we still have plenty of loyal members who renew their subscriptions every year, and several local artists have offered to donate work for our summer exhibition. Unfortunately, none of our recent grant applications have been successful, so we will need to look at other ways of raising money.

I know this isn't easy to hear, but I have a little confidence that the new marketing campaign will help turn things around. Let's talk it through properly next week.

Best wishes,
Daniel

1. Odd One Out

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

Set 1:

- a) Few tourists visited the town this winter because of the weather.
- b) A few shops decided to stay open late for the festival.
- c) Few passengers boarded the train, so it was completely packed.
- d) Few solutions were offered during the debate.

Set 2:

- a) There is little point in continuing the negotiations if both sides refuse to compromise.
- b) We have a little budget left for decorations.
- c) There was little enthusiasm for the plan, and everyone volunteered immediately.
- d) We felt a little relief when the results finally came through.

Set 3:

- a) Several witnesses gave conflicting accounts of the accident.
- b) Several changes were made to the original design.
- c) Several guests arrived at the empty hall for the cancelled event.
- d) Several reports confirmed the same conclusion.

Set 4:

- a) There was hardly any traffic on the roads this morning.
- b) Hardly any seats were left by the time we got to the cinema.
- c) There was hardly any support for the idea, so it was approved unanimously.
- d) Hardly any mistakes were found in the final report, which was reassuring.

Set 5:

- a) None of the tickets were sold in advance, so the show was cancelled.
- b) Most of the visitors praised the new exhibition.
- c) None of the members objected to the plan, but it failed to pass anyway.
- d) Most of the funding came from private donors.

2. Multiple Choice

Context: a charity bike ride

1. ___ of the riders have completed a long-distance event before, so we need to plan the route carefully.
Few / A few
2. Luckily, ___ experienced cyclists have volunteered to help marshal the route.
few / a few
3. There is ___ chance of finishing before dark if we start this late.
little / a little
4. Despite the rain, the team still has ___ enthusiasm for the challenge.
little / a little
5. ___ local shops have agreed to sponsor water stations along the route.
Several / Hardly any
6. ___ of the participants have registered their emergency contact details yet.
Hardly any / Most

3. Matching

Context: a language exchange group

Draw a line to match each sentence to its meaning.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Several members have suggested meeting twice a week instead of once. | <i>More than enough ideas</i> |
| 2. There is little enthusiasm for changing the meeting location. | <i>The majority of the group</i> |
| 3. Most of the group prefer speaking practice over grammar exercises. | <i>A number of members - more than just one or two</i> |
| 4. Hardly any newcomers stayed after their first visit last month. | <i>Almost none returned</i> |
| 5. The group still has plenty of ideas for future topics. | <i>Almost no support - people are against it</i> |

4. Gap Fill

Context: a local choir's struggles

Complete this passage with the correct quantifier for each gap.

Keeping the choir running has become harder over the past couple of years. _____ of the younger singers have stayed involved after finishing school, which makes it difficult to plan for the future. We receive _____ support from the local council these days, and _____ venues in town are willing to host us for free anymore. Despite this, we still have _____ hope that the new recruitment drive will help, especially since _____ nearby choirs have offered to organise a joint concert with us.

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

5. Error Identification

Context: a struggling restaurant

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

1. The restaurant has few money left to pay staff this month.
2. There are little regular customers left since the new place opened nearby.
3. We have a few patience left to keep the business running much longer.
4. The restaurant has plenty of bookings this week, so we're worried about staying open.
5. There is hardly any demand for the new menu, so we're struggling to keep up with orders.

6. Sentence Reordering

Context: organising a book club meeting

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

_____ Maybe we should follow up, since we still have plenty of copies of the book left to hand out.

_____ That's odd, since several people mentioned they were looking forward to it.

_____ Have you got a few minutes to talk about next month's book club meeting?

_____ Sure, I have a little time before I need to leave.

_____ Great. We've had hardly any replies to the invitation so far.

7. Complete the Conversation

Context: a neighbourhood watch meeting

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

Chair: How many residents came to last month's meeting?

Secretary: _____ - only four people showed up, which was disappointing.

Chair: That's a shame. Is there _____ chance we can get more people involved this time?

Secretary: Actually, there is _____ cause to be hopeful - a few new neighbours have just moved in.

Chair: _____ residents have already said they'll help distribute leaflets.

Secretary: Good. _____ of the budget has been spent so far, so we have money for more leaflets.

Chair: We still have _____ time before the next meeting to plan properly.

Secretary: Agreed. _____ of the committee will need to help with the leaflet drop.

1. Odd One Out – Answers

Set 1: **c)**

“Few passengers” (negative) contradicts “completely packed”.

Set 2: **c)**

“Little enthusiasm” (negative) contradicts “everyone volunteered immediately”.

Set 3: **c)**

“Several guests” arriving contradicts an “empty hall” for a “cancelled event”.

Set 4: **c)**

“Hardly any support” contradicts unanimous approval.

Set 5: **c)**

If none objected, the plan logically should not have failed to pass.

2. Multiple Choice - Answers

1. ___ of the riders have completed a long-distance event before. **Few**
2. Luckily, ___ experienced cyclists have volunteered to help. **a few**
3. There is ___ chance of finishing before dark. **little**
4. The team still has ___ enthusiasm for the challenge. **a little**
5. ___ local shops have agreed to sponsor water stations. **Several**
6. ___ of the participants have registered their details yet. **Hardly any**

3. Matching - Answers

1. Several members have suggested meeting twice a week instead of once.
A number of members - more than one or two
2. There is little enthusiasm for changing the meeting location.
Almost no support - people are against it
3. Most of the group prefer speaking practice over grammar exercises.
The majority of the group
4. Hardly any newcomers stayed after their first visit last month.
Almost none returned
5. The group still has plenty of ideas for future topics.
More than enough ideas

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 restaurant has few money left...
Fix: few → little - Countable word used with an uncountable noun ("money")
2. There are little regular customers left...
Fix: little → few - Uncountable word used with a countable noun ("customers")
3. We have a few patience left to keep going...
Fix: a few → a little - Countable word used with an uncountable noun ("patience")
4. The restaurant has plenty of bookings, so we're worried...
Fix: plenty of → hardly any - Positive meaning used, but context is negative (worried about staying open)
5. There is hardly any demand..., so we're struggling to keep up.
Fix: hardly any → plenty of - Negative meaning used, but context is positive (struggling to keep up with orders)

6. Sentence Reordering - Answers

1. Have you got a few minutes to talk about next month's book club meeting?
2. Sure, I have a little time before I need to leave.
3. Great. We've had hardly any replies to the invitation so far.
4. That's odd, since several people mentioned they were looking forward to it.
5. Maybe we should follow up, since we still have plenty of copies of the book left to hand out.

7. Complete the Conversation - Answers

Secretary:	Few - only four people showed up, which was disappointing.	Few
Chair:	Is there little chance we can get more people involved?	little
Secretary:	There is a little cause to be hopeful.	a little
Chair:	Several residents have said they'll help distribute leaflets.	Several
Secretary:	Hardly any of the budget has been spent so far.	Hardly any
Chair:	We still have plenty of time before the next meeting.	plenty of
Secretary:	Most of the committee will need to help.	Most