

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

B1 English Worksheet – Lesson 3: 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 Community Radio Station in Trouble

Read the email below, then complete Exercise 1.

Subject: Funding Update and Next Steps

Dear Team,

I wanted to give you an update before our meeting on Thursday. As most of you will have noticed, our listener numbers have dropped since the local commercial station launched its new breakfast show, and although we've introduced several new programmes to compete, hardly any of them have attracted a large audience so far. We currently have few sponsors willing to commit to long-term advertising, which makes budgeting very difficult, and there is little we can do to change this before the new financial year.

On a more encouraging note, we still have plenty of dedicated volunteers presenting shows every week, and several community groups have asked to feature on our weekend programmes. Unfortunately, none of our funding applications to the arts council have been successful this year, so we will need to explore other options.

I know this isn't the news you were hoping for, but I have a little optimism that our upcoming fundraising evening will help ease the pressure. Let's go through the details properly on Thursday.

Best,
Priya

1. Odd One Out

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

Set 1:

- a) Few passengers complained about the delay, which was surprising given how late the train was.
- b) A few technicians stayed late to fix the fault.
- c) Few problems occurred during the trial run, so the launch was postponed.
- d) There were few objections to the new timetable.

Set 2:

- a) There is little doubt that the merger will go ahead as planned.
- b) We have a little flexibility left in the schedule.
- c) There was little demand for the product, so the factory increased production.
- d) We felt a little pride when the team finally won.

Set 3:

- a) Several passengers missed their connecting flights.
- b) Several changes were proposed at the annual meeting.
- c) Several people showed up to the cancelled rehearsal, which had been moved online.
- d) Several newspapers covered the story the following morning.

Set 4:

- a) There was hardly any snow this winter compared to last year.
- b) Hardly any tickets are left for tonight's performance.
- c) There was hardly any resistance to the plan, so it was rejected immediately.
- d) Hardly any errors were found during the inspection, which was a relief.

Set 5:

- a) None of the walls in the building met safety standards, so it was closed immediately.
- b) Most of the attendees enjoyed the workshop.
- c) None of the reviewers criticised the film, yet it received terrible ratings overall.
- d) Most of the damage was caused by the storm.

2. Multiple Choice

Context: organising a village fete

1. ___ of the stallholders have confirmed their attendance yet, which is worrying this close to the date.
Few / A few
2. Luckily, ___ enthusiastic parents have offered to help set up the tents.
few / a few
3. There is ___ chance of good weather according to the forecast.
little / a little
4. Despite the forecast, the organisers still have ___ hope that it won't rain.
little / a little
5. ___ local farmers have agreed to donate produce for the stalls.
Several / Hardly any
6. ___ of the raffle prizes have been collected from sponsors so far.
Hardly any / Most

3. Matching

Context: a university debate society

Draw a line to match each sentence to its meaning.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Several members have proposed changing the debate format this term. | <i>More than enough trophies</i> |
| 2. There is little interest in international debating competitions this year. | <i>The majority of the society</i> |
| 3. Most of the society attend the weekly practice sessions. | <i>A number of members - more than just one or two</i> |
| 4. Hardly any freshers joined after the welcome event. | <i>Almost none signed up</i> |
| 5. The society still has plenty of trophies from previous years. | <i>Almost no interest - a noticeable drop</i> |

4. Gap Fill

Context: a village shop under threat

Complete this passage with the correct quantifier for each gap.

Running the village shop has become a real challenge over the past few years. _____ of the younger residents do their shopping locally anymore, preferring the supermarket in the next town. We get _____ support from the parish council these days, and _____ suppliers are willing to deliver to such a small, remote location. Despite all this, we still have _____ confidence that the shop can survive, especially since _____ nearby villages have expressed interest in setting up a shared delivery scheme.

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

5. Error Identification

Context: a failing gym chain

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

1. The gym chain has few money left to pay its landlords.
2. There are little members renewing their memberships this year.
3. We have a few motivation left to keep the classes running.
4. The gym has plenty of new sign-ups this month, so we're worried about closing branches.
5. There is hardly any demand for personal training sessions, so we can't keep up with bookings.

6. Sentence Reordering

Context: a school fundraising quiz night

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

_____ Maybe we should remind them, since we still have plenty of tables left to fill.

_____ That's surprising, since several parents mentioned they were keen to come.

_____ Have you got a few minutes to talk about the quiz night arrangements?

_____ Sure, I have a little time before the next class starts.

_____ Great. We've had hardly any table bookings so far this week.

7. Complete the Conversation

Context: a residents' association AGM

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

Chair: How many residents renewed their membership this year?

Secretary: _____ - only five people renewed, which is a real worry.

Chair: That's concerning. Is there _____ chance we can attract new members before next year?

Secretary: Actually, there is _____ cause for hope - several new families have just moved onto the estate.

Chair: _____ residents have already offered to help organise the summer event.

Secretary: Good. _____ of the annual budget has been spent so far, so there's money for new activities.

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

Secretary: Agreed. _____ of the committee will need to help organise it.

1. Odd One Out – Answers

Set 1: **c)**

“Few problems” (things went well) contradicts the launch being “postponed”.

Set 2: **c)**

“Little demand” (negative) contradicts the factory “increasing production”.

Set 3: **c)**

A cancelled, online-only rehearsal is inconsistent with people “showing up” in person.

Set 4: **c)**

“Hardly any resistance” contradicts the plan being “rejected”.

Set 5: **c)**

If no reviewer criticised the film, it's inconsistent for it to get terrible ratings.

2. Multiple Choice - Answers

1. ___ of the stallholders have confirmed their attendance yet. **Few**
2. Luckily, ___ enthusiastic parents have offered to help. **a few**
3. There is ___ chance of good weather according to the forecast. **little**
4. The organisers still have ___ hope that it won't rain. **a little**
5. ___ local farmers have agreed to donate produce for the stalls. **Several**
6. ___ of the raffle prizes have been collected so far. **Hardly any**

3. Matching - Answers

1. Several members have proposed changing the debate format this term.
A number of members - more than one or two
2. There is little interest in international debating competitions this year.
Almost no interest - a noticeable drop
3. Most of the society attend the weekly practice sessions.
The majority of the society
4. Hardly any freshers joined after the welcome event.
Almost none signed up
5. The society still has plenty of trophies from previous years.
More than enough trophies

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 gym chain has few money left...
Fix: few → little - Countable word used with an uncountable noun ("money")
2. There are little members renewing memberships...
Fix: little → few - Uncountable word used with a countable noun ("members")
3. We have a few motivation left to keep going...
Fix: a few → a little - Countable word used with an uncountable noun ("motivation")
4. The gym has plenty of new sign-ups, so we're worried...
Fix: plenty of → hardly any - Positive meaning used, but context is negative (worried about closing branches)
5. There is hardly any demand..., so we can't keep up.
Fix: hardly any → plenty of - Negative meaning used, but context is positive (can't keep up with bookings)

6. Sentence Reordering - Answers

1. Have you got a few minutes to talk about the quiz night arrangements?
2. Sure, I have a little time before the next class starts.
3. Great. We've had hardly any table bookings so far this week.
4. That's surprising, since several parents mentioned they were keen to come.
5. Maybe we should remind them, since we still have plenty of tables left to fill.

7. Complete the Conversation - Answers

Secretary:	Few - only five people renewed, which is a real worry.	Few
Chair:	Is there little chance we can attract new members?	little
Secretary:	There is a little cause for hope.	a little
Chair:	Several residents have offered to help organise it.	Several
Secretary:	Hardly any of the annual budget has been spent.	Hardly any
Chair:	We still have plenty of time before the next AGM.	plenty of
Secretary:	Most of the committee will need to help organise it.	Most