Quantifiers

Quantifiers Before Noncount Nouns or Plural Count Nouns (1)

Before Noncount Nouns

When I was a student, I spent

\{ little
  a little
  a great deal of
  a large amount of
  (too) much
\} time on the computer.

Before Plural Count Nouns

Few
A few
Several
Quite a few
A large number of
A majority of
Many
people say that they use text messaging.

- Quantifiers come before nouns or noun phrases and are used to talk about amounts. They answer the questions: How much? or How many?
- These quantifiers don't express an exact amount, but only indicate whether the amount is large or small. They are used before either noncount nouns or plural count nouns (but not both).
Quantifiers Before Noncount Nouns or Plural Count Nouns (2)

(A) little and (A) few
Some fish need little oxygen to survive. (They don’t need much air.)
We saved a little money. (We saved a small amount of money)
Few people know that the Grand Canyon is in Arizona. (Not many people know this fact.)
Can I borrow a few dollars? (I want to borrow a small amount of money.)

Much and Many
How much time do you need? I don’t waste much time.
How many friends do you have? I don’t know many people.

• Little (= not much) has a negative meaning, whereas a little (= not very much, but some) has a positive meaning. Few (= not many) and a few (= not very many, but some) follow the same principle.
• Much is used with noncount nouns. Many is used with plural count nouns to ask about amounts. (They usually imply there is at least some.) In negative statements, not much and not many refer to a small amount.
• Much is not usually used alone in affirmative statements to indicate a large amount. A lot of is preferred.
  That’s a lot of information to memorize.
  X That’s much information to memorize. (incorrect)

Quantifiers Before Both Noncount Nouns and Plural Count Nouns

Before Noncount Nouns and Plural Count Nouns

No
Hardly any
Some
Plenty of
A lot of / Lots of
Almost all
All

mail was delivered today.
questions were answered at the press conference.

• These quantifiers—except for no—don’t express an exact amount, but only indicate whether the quantity is large or small.
• No and hardly any are not used with negative statements. Some is often used with negative statements in subject position. In other positions, any is used instead.
  Some people don’t like to use email. I don’t have any new email messages.
• Plenty of implies that you have enough of something. You don’t need any more.
  We have plenty of eggs. We don’t need to get any at the store.
• Any is used to ask about amounts. (Any can cover a wide range from none to all.) In negative statements, not any means “none”.
  Did you get any mail today? I didn’t get any mail.
  Did he make any remarks? He didn’t make any remarks.
## Quantifiers with *Of*

### Quantifiers with Nonspecific Nouns

- All kids like ice cream.
  (= kids in general)
- A little cheese can be good for you.
  (= cheese in general)
- A lot of computers have anti-spam software.
- No homework will be assigned in this class.

### Quantifiers with Specific Nouns

- All (of) my kids like ice cream.
  (= a certain group of kids)
- A little of the cheese was moldy.
  (= a specific piece of cheese)
- A lot of these computers have anti-spam software.
- None of our homework has been checked yet.

### Noncount Quantifiers with Singular Count Nouns

- Some of the book is interesting, but I wouldn’t recommend it.
- A little of the roast got burnt.

### Quantifiers with Nonspecific and Specific Nouns

- Most quantifiers can occur with or without *of*, but they are used with different kinds of nouns. Use quantifiers alone to talk about a nonspecific noun or a noun in general. Use quantifiers with *of* + a determiner (e.g., *the*, *our*, *these*) to talk about a specific noun.
- Some quantifiers—such as *a lot of* and *plenty of*—always occur with *of*. With this group of quantifiers, *of* is used before both nonspecific and specific nouns. The difference is the addition of the determiner.
- When talking about specific nouns, *of* is optional after *all*. No cannot be followed by *of*. Use *none* instead.
- Use either singular or plural verbs after *none*.
  - *None of the answers are correct.*
  - *None of the answers is correct.*
- Quantifiers with *of* can also be used with pronouns to talk about specific nouns.
  - *All of them* like ice cream.
  - *None of it* has been checked yet.
  - *Some of it* is interesting.
- **Noncount quantifiers with singular count nouns:** If a singular count noun is thought of as something made up of parts (or having mass), a noncount quantifier with *of* can be used to refer to a part of the whole.

## Quantifiers Used as Pronouns

- *Some people* spend their time online searching for information, but a *large number* use the Internet for email.
- *Few of my students* like homework, but *some* do.
- I’ve run out of *change*. Do you have *any*?
- I thought that *help* would arrive soon, but *none* did.

### Quantifiers can be used as pronouns when the meaning is clear from the context. To form the pronoun, the noun following the quantifier is dropped.
- When quantifiers with *of* (e.g., *a lot of*, *plenty of*, *a large number of*) are used as pronouns, *of* is dropped.
- *No* and *every* are not used as pronouns. Use *none* and *every one* instead.