

## *Little, a little, few, a few*

(A) *little* and (a) *few* are quantifiers meaning 'some'. *Little* and *few* have negative meanings: they imply that there is not very much/many of the thing in question. *A little* and *a few* are not negative in this way: they put the accent on the fact that there is a certain quantity of the thing in question.

Compare:

<i>All she wanted was <b>a few</b> moments on her own.</i>	some, a small number
<i>She had <b>few</b> moments on her own.</i>	not many/almost none
<i>She saves <b>a little</b> money every month.</i>	some, a small amount
<i>They had <b>little</b> money to spend.</i>	not much/almost nothing
A: <i>Have you got any money?</i> B: <i>Yes, <b>a little</b>.</i>	some, a small amount
A: <i>Have you got any money?</i> B: <i>No, very <b>little</b>.</i>	not much/almost nothing

### *A little, a few with a noun*

We use *a little* with singular uncountable nouns. We use *a few* with plural countable nouns:

*Mary said nothing, but she drank some tea and ate **a little** bread.*

*We stayed **a few** days in Florence and visited the museums.*

### *Little, few with a noun*

We use *little* with uncountable nouns. We use *few* with plural countable nouns. They are used in formal contexts:

*I'm not very happy about it but I suppose I have **little** choice.*

***Few** cities anywhere in Europe can match the cultural richness of Berlin.*

*At that time **few** people travelled who didn't have to.*

## **(A) little, (a) few without a noun**

We can use *(a) little* and *(a) few* as pronouns. We can use them to substitute for a noun when it is obvious from the context:

*After that, she began to tell them **a little** about her life in Scotland, particularly her life with the Rosenblooms.*

*Don't take all the strawberries. Just have **a few**.* (Just have a few strawberries.)

*Little* and *few* are not very common without a noun. We use them in formal contexts:

***Little** is known about his upbringing and education.*

***Few** would be in favour of police officers carrying weapons.*

## **(A) little of, (a) few of**

We use *of* with *(a) little* and *(a) few* when they come before articles (*a/an, the*), demonstratives (*this, that*), possessives (*my, your*) or pronouns (*him, them*):

*Put the flour into a bowl, blend with **a little of** the milk, beat in the egg yolks, then the sugar and the rest of the milk.*

***A few of** his films were seen abroad.*

## **A little: adverb**

We use *a little* as an adverb of degree. It is more formal than *a bit*:

*He smiled just **a little**.*

*Her hands were shaking **a little**.*

## **A little with adjectives, determiners, adverbs**

We use *a little* before adjectives and adverbs to modify them. It is more formal than *a bit*:

*She seemed to be getting **a little** better.*

*What you need is **a little** more romance.*

We often use *a little* with *bit*:

*I find that **a little** bit hard to believe.*