

about²

S1 W1

adverb

- 1 (also **round about** (spoken)) APPROXIMATELY a little more or less than a particular number, amount, or size

SYN roughly,
approximately

I live about 10 miles away.

a tiny computer about as big as a postcard

We left the restaurant at round about 10.30.

In written English, people usually prefer to use **approximately**, as it sounds more technical:

*The cost to taxpayers is **approximately** \$200 billion.*

- 2 ABOUT (BrE) in many different directions within a place or in different parts of a place

SYN around

People were rushing about, trying to find the driver.

Cushions were scattered about on the chairs.

- 3 HERE near to you or in the same place as you:

Is Derek about? There's a phone call for him.

Quick! Let's go while there's no-one about.

- 4 (BrE) (spoken) COMMON existing or available now:

*I hope she hasn't caught flu. **There's a lot of it about.***

She might get temporary work, but there's not much about.

- 5 (informal) ALMOST almost or probably:

I was about ready to leave when somebody rang the

doorbell.

'Have you finished?' 'Just about.'

It's just about the worst mistake anyone could make.

6 that's about it/all (spoken) ALL/EVERYTHING

a)

used to tell someone that you have told them everything you know:

He was a quiet chap, married with kids. That's about it, really.

b)

used to say that there is nothing else available:

There's some cheese in the fridge and that's about it.

7 OPPOSITE/REVERSE SO as to face in the opposite direction

SYN around

He quickly turned about and walked away.

Word origin

Language: Old English

Origin: *abutan*, from *a-* 'on' + *butan* 'outside'

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

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