

Quite, pretty, rather and fairly

A

You can use **quite/pretty/rather/fairly** + adjectives or adverbs. So you can say:

- ☐ It's **quite** cold. It's **pretty** cold. It's **rather** cold. It's **fairly** cold.

Quite/pretty/rather/fairly = less than 'very' but more than 'a little'.

B

Quite and **pretty** are similar in meaning:

- ☐ I'm surprised you haven't heard of her. She's **quite famous** / **pretty famous**. (= less than 'very famous', but more than 'a little famous')
- ☐ Anna lives **quite near** me, so we see each other **pretty often**.

Pretty is an informal word and is used mainly in spoken English.

Quite goes before **a/an**:

- ☐ We live in **quite an old house**. (*not* a quite old house)

Compare:

- ☐ Sarah has **quite a** good job.
Sarah has **a pretty** good job.

You can also use **quite** (but not **pretty**) in the following ways:

quite a/an + *noun* (without an adjective):

- ☐ I didn't expect to see them. It was **quite a surprise**. (= quite a big surprise)

quite a lot (of ...):

- ☐ There were **quite a lot of** people at the meeting.

quite + verb, especially **like** and **enjoy**:

- ☐ I **quite like** tennis, but it's not my favourite sport.

C

Rather is similar to **quite** and **pretty**. We often use **rather** for negative ideas (things we think are not good):

- ☐ The weather isn't so good. It's **rather cloudy**.
- ☐ Paul is **rather shy**. He doesn't talk very much.

Quite and **pretty** are also possible in these examples.

When we use **rather** for positive ideas (**good/nice** etc.), it means 'unusually' or 'surprisingly':

- ☐ These oranges are **rather good**. Where did you get them?

D

Fairly is weaker than **quite/rather/pretty**. For example, if something is **fairly good**, it is not very good and it could be better:

- ☐ My room is **fairly big**, but I'd prefer a bigger one.
- ☐ We see each other **fairly often**, but not as often as we used to.

E

Quite also means 'completely'. For example:

- ☐ 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, **quite sure**.' (= completely sure)

Quite means 'completely' with a number of adjectives, especially:

sure	right	true	clear	different	incredible	amazing
certain	wrong	safe	obvious	unnecessary	extraordinary	impossible

- ☐ She was **quite different** from what I expected. (= completely different)
- ☐ Everything they said was **quite true**. (= completely true)

We also use **quite** (= completely) with some verbs. For example:

- ☐ I **quite agree** with you. (= I completely agree)

Not quite = not completely:

- ☐ They **haven't quite finished** eating yet.
- ☐ I **don't quite understand** what you mean.
- ☐ 'Are you ready yet?' '**Not quite**.' (= not completely)