

Lesson 22

Determiners 1 – Qualifiers

In this lesson, we're going to learn about determiners.

What is a determiner?

A determiner is a word that introduces a noun.

It tells us more about the noun, for example, if it's singular or plural. In this case, we use **a**, **an** and **the** as we saw in Lesson 21.

- We saw a giraffe at the zoo.
- The children were playing soccer.

Types of determiners

There are also determiners that tell us how many or how much.

These determiners called **qualifiers**.

- There were a lot of dogs in the park today.

A determiner can also tell us who the noun relates to.

These determiners are called **possessives**.

- Dita gave me her phone number.

And, a determiner can tell us where something is in relation to the speaker in terms of time or place.

These are called **demonstratives**.

- I went swimming this morning.

After **a**, **an** and **the**, qualifiers, possessives and demonstratives are the most common types of determiners.

Where to place determiners

A determiner always comes before the noun and before any adjectives used to describe the noun.

Here are some examples to illustrate this. They include adjectives that give more information about the noun.

- I try to eat a healthy diet.
- Gerrard cycled up the steep hill.
- There are many colourful parrots in the tree.
- I am visiting my elderly parents at the weekend.
- Those rotten apples should be thrown out.

For the rest of this lesson, we're going to learn about qualifiers. Then, in Lesson 23, we'll look at possessives and demonstratives.

Qualifiers

Qualifiers tell us how many or how much of the noun is being talked about. They include words such as:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• some• any• much• many• lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• few• little• every• each• all• most
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1. some & any

We'll start with **some** and **any**. We can use these two words with plural nouns and uncountable nouns. For example,

- I took **some** old clothes to the charity shop today.
- I might bake **some** muffins this afternoon.
- I can't see **any** birds on my nut feeder.
- Is there **any** pasta in the cupboard?

We don't use **some** and **any** with singular countable nouns. Instead, we use **a** or **an**.

- ✗ It's raining and I don't have ~~some umbrella~~.
- ✗ It's raining and I don't have ~~any umbrella~~.
- ✓ It's raining and I don't have **an** umbrella.

- ✘ Do you have ~~some~~ cold?
- ✘ Do you have ~~any~~ cold?
- ✔ Do you have a cold?

General rule:

We use **some** for talking in the positive.

We use **any** for questions and negatives.

Here are some of our examples again with the rules noted.

- I took **some** old clothes to the charity shop today. (positive)
- I might bake **some** muffins this afternoon. (positive)
- I can't see **any** birds on my nut feeder. (negative)
- Is there **any** pasta in the cupboard? (question)

Practice

some and any

Practice using **some** and **any** by completing the sentences below.

Note that one sentence contains a singular noun so you'll need to use a different determiner in this one.

Practice

some any

1. Do we have chocolate?
2. I think there's bar of chocolate in the cupboard.
3. No, I can't see chocolate in the cupboard.
4. I'll buy you bars when I next go shopping.

Scroll down for the answers.

Answers

1. Do we have **any** chocolate?
2. I think there's **a** bar of chocolate in the cupboard.
3. No, I can't see **any** chocolate in the cupboard.
4. I'll buy you **some** bars when I next go shopping.

Using **some** & **any** alone

We can use **some** and **any** on their own when the noun they relate to has recently been used. For example,

- I've made gravy. Would you like **some** on your dinner?
(= some gravy)
- The strawberries in the market smelt delicious so I bought **some**.
(= some strawberries)
- I've heard there are otters in our river but I've never seen **any**.
(= any otters)
- The tomatoes in the supermarket were going rotten so I didn't buy **any**.
(= any tomatoes)

There are two exceptions to these general rules that I particularly want to draw your attention to.

Exception 1

First, although we normally use **any** in questions, we can use **some** in questions that make an offer or request something specific. For example,

- Would you like some wine?
- Can I have some more pudding, please?

Exception 2

Second, although we normally use **some** in positive sentences, we can use **any** in positive sentences containing these adverbs:

- rarely
- scarcely
- hardly
- barely
- seldom

For example,

- She barely drinks any alcohol these days.
- There were hardly any people on the beach today.
- There is rarely any fresh fruit left by the time she gets to the market.
- I seldom see any of my friends these days as I'm studying hard for my exams.

2. much, many, & a lot

Next, we'll look at **much**, **many** and **a lot**.

The general rules are easy to remember.

We use **much** with uncountable nouns. For example,

- I've eaten too much chocolate and I feel sick.
- The boss didn't show much compassion when my mother died.

We use **many** with plural countable nouns.

For example,

- There aren't many books on building your own home in the library.
- I don't have many days of my holiday left.

We can use **much** and **many** with positive and negative sentences as well as with questions.

As with **some** and **any**, we can use **much** and **many** on their own when the noun they relate to has recently been used. For example,

- She's visited over 30 countries but I haven't been to nearly as many.
(= many countries)
- It's not surprising Sharon has a bad hangover after all the alcohol she drank at the party. I'm fine as I didn't drink much.
(= much alcohol)

When we're talking about a large quantity of something, we usually use **a lot of** or **lots of** instead of **much** and **many**.

They can be used with all nouns and, in most situations, either can be used. For example,

- The website contained **lots of information** on hiking holidays in Europe. (= much information)
- There were **lots of people** at the swimming pool today. (= many people)
- He has **a lot of nerve** speaking to you like that. (= much nerve)
- I have **a lot of newts** in my wildlife pond. (= many newts)

Exception to the rule

The exception to this rule is with time for which we use **many**, not **a lot of** or **lots of**. For example,

- ~~✗ I've been going to France on holiday for a lot of years.~~
- ✓ I've been going to France on holiday for **many years**.
- ~~✗ He'll be off sick with that broken leg for lots of weeks.~~
- ✓ He'll be off sick with that broken leg for **many weeks**.

Practice

much, many, a lot of & lots of

Practice using **much**, **many** and **a lot of** or **lots of** by completing these sentences.

Practice

much many a lot of / lots of

1. It took courage to do the bungee jump.
2. We haven't sold..... tickets to our concert yet.
3. How..... money have you saved for your holiday?
4. His work took him away from his family formonths at a time.

Scroll down for the answers.

Answers

1. It took **a lot of** courage to do the bungee jump.
2. We haven't sold **many** tickets to our concert yet.
3. How **much** money have you saved for your holiday?
4. His work took him away from his family for **many** months at a time.

3. little & few

Our next pair of qualifiers are **little** and **few**.

We use these words with a noun when there are not many or there is not much of something.

We use **few/a few** with plural countable nouns and **little/a little** with uncountable nouns. For example,

- I need to put **a little** more salt in this soup.
- There is **little** reason to hurry now as the bus has already gone.
- I have **a few** really close friends.
- She had **few** customers in the shop that afternoon.

There is a slight difference between **little** and **a little**, and **few** and **a few**. Can you work out what it is from the sentences above?

We say **a little** or **a few** when we mean a small amount.

We say **little** or **few** when the amount is so small that it is almost nothing.

For example,

- There is **a little** time before the train leaves. (**a little** = a small amount)
- There is **little** time before the train leaves. We must hurry. (**little** = not much)
- I have **a few** chocolates left. (**a few** = a small number)
- I have **few** chocolates left. (**few** = not many)

All these sentences have negative meanings but we can also use **little** and **few** with a noun we want to give a positive meaning to.

For example,

- We're very pleased that there have been **few complaints** about the new bus timetable.
- They were fortunate as there was **little rain** during their holiday.
- Our early morning drive to the coast was easy as there was **little traffic** on the roads at that time.
- I've had this car for nearly ten years and had very **few problems** with it.

Practice

little & few

Practice using **little** and **few** by completing these sentences.

Practice

a few few a little little

1. There isorange juice left in the jug.
2. I've given up my dance class asof my friends go anymore.
3. My boyfriend and I have been having..... arguments lately.
4. We're annoyed because the planners have given information about the new development.

Scroll down for the answers.

Answers

1. There is a little orange juice left in the jug.
2. I've given up my dance class because few of my friends go anymore.
3. My boyfriend and I have been having a few arguments lately.
4. We're annoyed because the planners have given little information about the new development.

4. each & every

Next, we'll look at **each** and **every**.

Each and **every** are used with a singular noun.

In many situations, either word can be used. For example,

- I go to the gym each Tuesday.
- I go to the gym every Tuesday.

However, there are some situations when we use either one or the other.

Each is used when talking about individual people or things.

Every is used when talking about a group of people or things.

For example,

- Each teacher has a different method of teaching their pupils.
(teacher = individual teachers)
- Every teacher at my school works hard to help their pupils learn.
(teacher = all teachers at my school)

Here are two more situations when we use **every**.

We can use **every** with the adverbs **nearly** and **almost**.

For example,

- I've read nearly every **book** written by my favourite author.
- I lose at tennis almost every **time** I play my best friend.

And, we use **every** to talk about frequency, that is, how often something happens. For example,

- I walk my dog every day at around 6 o'clock.
- She has her hair cut every six weeks.
- I go for a run every Saturday.

5. all & most

Finally, we'll look at **all** and **most**.

Both these qualifiers are used with plural nouns to talk about things in general.

For example,

- Most cars emit toxic fumes.
- Most cats like to chase mice.
- All the competitors completed the race.
- All the chocolates melted in the hot sun.

most of & all of

When referring to a specific group, we add **of** after **most** and **all**.

- **Most of** the people in my village are poor.
- **Most of** my colleagues at work speak English.

With **all**, we only use **of** before a pronoun.

- **All** the musicians in the band were excellent. (not ~~all of~~ the musicians)
- **All of them** came on back on stage at the end for an encore. (not ~~all them~~)

All can also be used with singular nouns referring to time. For example,

- I have been writing this essay **all day**.
- The weather has been great **all week**.
- This is the first rainy day we've had **all month**.
- I haven't had a holiday **all year**.

Practice

each, every, all & most

Practice using **each**, **every**, **all** and **most** by completing the sentences below.

Practice

each every most all

1. the cakes in the bakery looked delicious.
2. I likebreeds of dog but my favourite is a collie.
3. artist painted the landscape in a different style.
4. child who took part in sports day received a medal.

Scroll down for the answers.

Answers

1. **All** the cakes in the bakery looked delicious.
2. I like **most** breeds of dog but my favourite is a collie.
3. **Each** artist painted the landscape in a different style.
4. **Every** child who took part in sports day received a medal.

Summary

That brings us to the end of this lesson on qualifiers. Here's a summary of what we've covered:

1. What is a determiner?
2. Introduction to qualifiers, possessives and demonstratives
3. When to use the following qualifiers:

- some
- any
- much
- many
- lot
- few
- little
- every
- each
- all
- most

In the next lesson, we'll look in detail at possessives and demonstratives.

