Hi! I’m Marianne Raynaud, and I’m here to help you improve your level of spoken English. Today’s podcast is an easy one. It deals with the difference between “much” and “many” as well as the use of “a little” versus “a few”. I hope it will make you feel more at ease when speaking English. If this episode is not challenging enough, you will find others with more complex grammar on our website. Let’s get started.

*With uncountable nouns or mass nouns where you can’t tell the exact number, in other words you can’t “count” the quantity with precision we use “much” or “a little”. These nouns are always in the singular—even “news”, which takes a singular verb.*

So here are examples of big or fairly big quantities of some uncountable nouns:

- much luck / much rain / much enthusiasm / much traffic / much news

Repeat: much luck / much rain / much enthusiasm / much traffic / much news

With “luck” and “enthusiasm” it is obvious we can’t count the amount, but other nouns are less logical “uncountables”. We can say these nouns, which are often called “mass nouns” give an approximation and not an exact figure. The only way to learn them is to practice.

And here are examples of small or fairly small quantities of some uncountable nouns:

- a little luck / a little rain / a little enthusiasm / a little traffic / a little news

Repeat: a little luck / a little rain / a little enthusiasm / a little traffic / a little news

*On the contrary with all plural nouns that are countables we use “many” and “a few”:*

So here are examples of big or fairly big quantities of some countable nouns:

- many people / many cars / many friends / many countries

Repeat: many people / many cars / many friends / many countries

And here are examples of small or fairly small quantities of some countable nouns:

- a few people / a few cars / a few friends / a few countries

Repeat: a few people / a few cars / a few friends / a few countries
QT-ESL Podcast No. 56 Much vs. Many (Cont.)

Let’s work on some other nouns that take “much”. Listen and repeat.

much coffee  much water  much respect
much time    much wine   much luggage
much effort   much rice   much furniture
much information  much pasta  much encouragement

Please note these nouns seldom take “s” in the plural. They are generally not used in the plural except to indicate different varieties or with “many times” meaning many occasions. “News” is always singular. We say: “The news is good” or we say: “No news is good news”.

Now let’s take a look at some common nouns that use “many”. Listen and repeat.

many students many houses  many ways
many books    many skyscrapers many answers
many computers many opportunities many possibilities
many cups of tea many apples   many friends

In the next exercise, we’ll test ourselves. I will say a noun, and you will say “much” or “many” followed by the noun. Listen to the examples.

I say: coffee    I say: answers
You say: much coffee  You say: many answers

Now you go on in the same way. Be sure to speak before I give the answer.

coffee → much coffee    furniture → much furniture    possibilities → many possibilities
answers → many answers  houses → many houses    respect → much respect
apples → many apples    information → much information    rice → much rice
books → many books     luck → much luck       skyscrapers → many skyscrapers
computers → many computers    luggage → much luggage    students → many students
cups of tea → many cups of tea    news → much news    time → much time
effort → much effort    opportunities → many opportunities    times → many times
courage → much encouragement    pasta → much pasta    wine → much wine
friends → many friends    water → much water    wine bottles → many wine bottles

That’s the end of this podcast. I hope it has helped you to progress. In the next episode we will offer exercises with a little, a few and a lot of. Visit our website www.qualitytime-esl.com to download the transcript in PDF. At our store you will find files in DOC for a minimal fee to use when publishing your own workbooks as I explain in my book. And if you buy the DVD version of “QualityTime-ESL: The Digital Resource Book”, you will get all the scripts and worksheets of our different series. Bye for now, and don’t forget to keep smiling.

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