Hi! I am Marianne Raynaud, and I am here to help you improve your level of spoken English. This episode is the second in our series of podcast dealing with the difference between “much” and “many” as well as the use of “a little” versus “a few”. We will end with some work on “a lot of”. I hope this podcast will make you feel more at ease in English.

We learned previously that with uncountable nouns, which are generally found only in the singular, we use “much” and “a little”. Last time we practiced with “much” vs “many”. This time we’ll train with “a little” vs. “a few”. Notice we say “a little” and not just “little”. In the next podcast we’ll look at the difference in meaning between “a little” and “little” alone. But now let’s work on uncountable or mass nouns together with “a little”.

Listen and repeat.

a little coffee a little news a little respect
a little time a little wine a little luggage
a little money a little rice a little furniture
a little information a little pasta a little encouragement

As I said previously, these nouns seldom take an “s”. 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 train with some countable nouns that use “a few”. Listen and repeat

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

In the next exercise, you’ll test yourself. I will say a noun, and you will say “a little” or “a few” followed by the noun. Listen to the examples.

I say: coffee I say: answers
You say: a little coffee You say: a few answers

Now you go on in the same way.
QT-ESL Podcast No. 57 A Little/A Few/A Lot of (Cont.)

In many cases especially in informal speech “a lot of” is often used in the place of “much” or “many”. In the next exercise you will hear a sentences with “much” or “many” and you will change it using “a lot of”. Listen to the examples.

I say: The student gave many right answers.  You say: The student gave a lot of right answers.

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

The student gave many right answers. Do they have many friends at school?
The student gave a lot of right answers. Do they have a lot of friends at school?
They had much time to prepare. They had much luck and won the prize.
They had a lot of time to prepare. They had a lot of luck and won the prize.
Did you use many apples in the pie? He had much luggage and had to pay extra.
Did you use a lot of apples in the pie? He had a lot of luggage and had to pay extra.
She has made much money this year. If I eat much pasta, will I become fat?
She has made a lot of money this year. If I eat a lot of pasta, will I become fat?
Did you read many books this semester? In NYC there are many skyscrapers.
Did you read a lot of books this semester? In NYC there are a lot of skyscrapers.
He received much advice from the coach. There are many ways to improve your knowledge.
He received a lot of advice from the coach. There are a lot of ways to improve your knowledge.
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