



## ‘A little’ and ‘little’ and ‘a few’ and ‘few’

(This is an extract from my book: How to Use ‘A’ and ‘The’)

We use ‘a/an’ with several quantifiers:

- a little
- a few
- a lot (of)

We also use ‘no article’ with several:

- little
- few
- lots (of)

In many situations, we can choose to use ‘a little’ or ‘little’ (when using an uncountable noun) or ‘a few’ or ‘few’ (when using a plural countable noun). They have slightly different meanings. (‘A lot’ and ‘lots’ aren’t like this. ‘A lot’ means the same as ‘lots’).

When we say ‘a little’ or ‘a few’ we mean a small amount, but it’s enough.

- John: Let’s go out tonight.
- Lucy: Okay. I have **a little** money, enough for the cinema at least.

On the other hand, ‘little’ or ‘few’ usually give us a different impression. These also mean a small amount, but this time the amount is almost nothing. If the noun is something that we want (like money or friends) then using ‘little’ or ‘few’ means that we don’t have enough.

- John: Let’s go out tonight.
- Lucy: Sorry, I have **little** money. I really can’t afford to go out.

Of course, if we use ‘few’ or ‘little’ with a noun that we don’t want, then the sentence can have a positive meaning. It’s good to have nearly no problems.

- There have been **few** problems with the new system, thankfully!
- Luckily, there is **little** crime in my town.
- I’m so pleased that I have **few** arguments with my family.
- It’s great that there’s been very **little** bad weather this month.