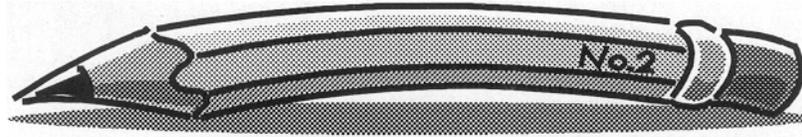


Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## GRAMMAR PRACTICE

### Choosing Between *Fewer* and *Less*

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The key to knowing when to use *fewer* and when to use *less* is having a firm understanding of mass nouns and count nouns.

- Mass nouns are called *non-count nouns* because they are not readily countable as with such words as *music, justice, time, sunbathing, and virtue*.
- Count nouns name things that you can count as with such words as *cars, books, shoes, friends*.

The rules of grammar state that we are to use *less* with mass or non-count nouns as in, “Once school starts, there is *less* time for sunbathing.”

We are to use *fewer* with count nouns as in “Math classes require *fewer* books than do English classes.”

Speakers often change mass nouns into count nouns either by providing a container (which can be counted) or by referring to the item with a different word. For example, *ice cream* is a mass noun, but *ice cream cones* can be counted. *Money* is a mass noun, but if we change and say *dollars*, then it can be counted. With the following examples of mass nouns using *less*, see if you can provide a way to turn them into count nouns so that *fewer* can be used.

*Less milk*, but *fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less honey*, but *fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less food*, but *fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less clothing*, but *fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less oil*, but *fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Less paint*, but *fewer* \_\_\_\_\_

(Possible answers: quarts of milk, jars of honey, hamburgers, shirts, barrels of oil, buckets of paint.)

Speakers of English can use *more* with either a count noun or a mass noun. This is probably one of the reasons that people have a hard time remembering that we need to distinguish between *fewer* and *less*. Another reason is that advertisers and package designers prefer to use short words so they can make the type bigger. Because of this, we sometimes see labels on prepared food and drink reading “LESS CALORIES!” In formal, written English the correct message would be “FEWER CALORIES!” because calories are something that can be counted.

## PRACTICE EXERCISE

With these sentences, write either *less* or *fewer* in the blank spaces.

1. She takes \_\_\_\_\_ care of her siblings than is good for them.
2. There are \_\_\_\_\_ murals in Denver than there are in San Francisco.
3. Radio disc jockeys play \_\_\_\_\_ rock music than they used to.
4. Radio disc jockeys play \_\_\_\_\_ rap songs than they used to.
5. Water has \_\_\_\_\_ calories than soda has.
6. We saw \_\_\_\_\_ cars by the Grand Canyon than we see everyday around Phoenix.
7. The students have \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to eat lunch now that the class periods are extended.
8. The student have \_\_\_\_\_ time to eat lunch now that the class periods are extended.
9. Does America have \_\_\_\_\_ culture than Mexico?
10. Suzie has \_\_\_\_\_ responsibilities now that her Aunt has come to help.

Answers: 1. less, 2. fewer, 3. less, 4. fewer, 5. fewer, 6. fewer, 7. fewer, 8. less, 9. less, 10. fewer

Part II: Now make up two sentences of your own using *fewer* and two using *less*.

fewer: 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

less 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

*Lesson created by Kristen Kelly*