

## Quite, pretty, rather and fairly

A

You can use **quite/pretty/rather/fairly** + adjectives or adverbs. So you can say:

- It's **quite** cold. It's **pretty** cold. It's **rather** cold. It's **fairly** cold.

**Quite/pretty/rather/fairly** = less than 'very' but more than 'a little'.

B

**Quite** and **pretty** are similar in meaning:

- I'm surprised you haven't heard of her. She's **quite famous** / **pretty famous**. (= less than 'very famous', but more than 'a little famous')
- Anna lives **quite near** me, so we see each other **pretty often**.

**Pretty** is an informal word and is used mainly in spoken English.

**Quite** goes before **a/an**:

- We live in **quite an old house**. (*not* a quite old house)

Compare:

- Sarah has **quite a** good job.  
Sarah has **a pretty** good job.

You can also use **quite** (but not **pretty**) in the following ways:

**quite a/an** + *noun* (without an adjective):

- I didn't expect to see them. It was **quite a surprise**. (= quite a big surprise)

**quite a lot** (of ...):

- There were **quite a lot of** people at the meeting.

**quite** + verb, especially **like** and **enjoy**:

- I **quite like** tennis, but it's not my favourite sport.

C

**Rather** is similar to **quite** and **pretty**. We often use **rather** for negative ideas (things we think are not good):

- The weather isn't so good. It's **rather cloudy**.
- Paul is **rather shy**. He doesn't talk very much.

**Quite** and **pretty** are also possible in these examples.

When we use **rather** for positive ideas (**good/nice** etc.), it means 'unusually' or 'surprisingly':

- These oranges are **rather good**. Where did you get them?

D

**Fairly** is weaker than **quite/rather/pretty**. For example, if something is **fairly good**, it is not very good and it could be better:

- My room is **fairly big**, but I'd prefer a bigger one.
- We see each other **fairly often**, but not as often as we used to.

E

**Quite** also means 'completely'. For example:

- 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, **quite sure**.' (= completely sure)

**Quite** means 'completely' with a number of adjectives, especially:

sure	right	true	clear	different	incredible	amazing
certain	wrong	safe	obvious	unnecessary	extraordinary	impossible

- She was **quite different** from what I expected. (= completely different)
- Everything they said was **quite true**. (= completely true)

We also use **quite** (= completely) with some verbs. For example:

- I **quite agree** with you. (= I completely agree)

**Not quite** = not completely:

- They **haven't quite finished** eating yet.
- I **don't quite understand** what you mean.
- 'Are you ready yet?' '**Not quite**.' (= not completely)

1 Complete the sentences using **quite** + the following:

famous good hungry late noisy often old surprised

- I'm surprised you haven't heard of her. She's quite famous.
- I'm ..... Is there anything to eat?
- 'How were the pictures you took?' '..... Better than usual.'
- I go to the cinema ..... – maybe once a month.
- We live near a very busy road, so it's often .....
- I didn't expect Laura to contact me. I was ..... when she phoned.
- I went to bed ..... last night, so I'm a bit tired this morning.
- I don't know exactly when these houses were built, but they're .....

2 Put the words in the right order to complete the sentences.

- The weather was better than we had expected.  
It was quite a nice day ..... (a / nice / quite / day).
- Tom likes to sing.  
He has ..... (voice / quite / good / a).
- The bus stop wasn't very near the hotel.  
We had to walk ..... (quite / way / a / long).
- It's not so warm today.  
There's ..... (a / wind / cold / pretty).
- The journey took longer than I expected.  
There was ..... (lot / traffic / a / of / quite).
- I'm tired.  
I've had ..... (pretty / day / a / busy).

3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use **rather** + adjective.

- The weather isn't so good. It's rather cloudy.
- I enjoyed the film, but it was .....
- The hotel we stayed at wasn't very good. I was .....
- I think it's ..... that Chris went away without telling anybody.
- Lucy doesn't like having to wait. Sometimes she's .....

4 What does **quite** mean in these sentences? Tick (✓) the right meaning.

- |   | <i>more than a little, less than very (Section B)</i> | <i>completely (Section E)</i> |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 It's <u>quite cold</u> . You'd better wear your coat.   | ✓   |                               |
| 2 'Are you sure?' 'Yes, <u>quite sure</u> .'              |   | ✓                             |
| 3 Anna's English is <u>quite good</u> .                   |   |                               |
| 4 I couldn't believe it. It was <u>quite incredible</u> . |   |                               |
| 5 My bedroom is <u>quite big</u> .                        |   |                               |
| 6 I'm <u>quite tired</u> . I think I'll go to bed.        |   |                               |
| 7 I <u>quite agree</u> with you.                          |   |                               |

5 Complete these sentences using **quite** + the following:

different impossible right safe sure ~~true~~ unnecessary

- I didn't believe her at first, but in fact what she said was quite true.
- You won't fall. The ladder is .....
- I'm afraid I can't do what you ask. It's .....
- I couldn't agree with you more. You are .....
- You can't compare the two things. They are .....
- You needn't have done that. It was .....
- I think I saw them go out, but I'm not .....