

Fewer or Less?

When dealing with a quantity that can be counted, use the word *fewer*.

I have *fewer* books than she does.
He has *fewer* apples than you do.

If a quantity cannot be counted, use *less*.

There is *less* sugar in this cup.
She has *less* water to drink.

In general, use *fewer* to modify plural nouns.

I promised to eat *fewer* pancakes at breakfast.

Exception: Use *less than* to modify plural nouns that indicate a measure of time, amount, or distance.

I leave in *less than* two weeks.
She had *less than* ten dollars in the bank.
He traveled *less than* six miles to get here.

Use *less* to modify singular nouns.

She promised to drink *less* coffee every day.

Exercises

Write *fewer* or *less* in the blanks.

1. There are _____ apples than oranges in this fruit basket.
2. We'll take _____ time if we drive on the interstate.
3. I need _____ water when I stay out of the sun.
4. _____ students take public transportation during the summer.
5. You can use _____ kindling to start a campfire if you use lighter fluid.
6. She wrote _____ pages than the assignment specified.
7. It costs _____ money to travel during the off-season.
8. He needed to use _____ salt in the recipe to make it taste good.

Answer Key: 1. fewer 2. less 3. less 4. Fewer 5. less 6. fewer 7. less 8. less

Works Consulted:

"Chicago Style Q&A: Less or Fewer?" The Chicago Manual of Style Online. The University of Chicago. 22 January 2010.

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/CMS_FAQ/LessorFewer/LessorFewer01.html>.