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.

**Activity**
Use either *fewer* or *less* in the below sentences. Follow the rules outlined above to help you make your selections.

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 for Activity

1. fewer
2. less
3. less
4. fewer
5. less
6. fewer
7. less
8. less

References

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