

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 very similar in meaning:

- ☐ You'll need a coat when you go out. It's **quite** cold / **pretty** cold. (= less than 'very cold', but more than 'a little cold')
- ☐ I'm surprised you haven't heard of her. She's **quite** famous / **pretty** famous.
- ☐ Amanda 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:

- ☐ Sally has **quite** a good job.
Sally 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:

- ☐ 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 their dinner yet.
- ☐ I **don't quite** understand what you mean.
- ☐ 'Are you ready yet?' 'Not **quite**.' (= not completely)