

I'm fairly certain that he's going to be the thief.

The tickets were pretty expensive.

It's rather a disappointment. I wished we'd seen the other one.



It's a bit slow. When's the action scene?

The plot is quite confusing.

The book was a bit better than the film.

## Presentation

A qualifier is a word or phrase that modifies the meaning of the words that follow it. It either intensifies or softens the meaning of the words. Qualifiers include the words *fairly*, *quite*, *pretty*, *rather*, *slightly*, *a little* and *a bit*.

### fairly

Use *fairly* to modify the meaning of adjectives and adverbs. It means 'to a limited degree':

It's **fairly** easy to understand. (= it was easy, but not very easy)

### quite

*Quite* often suggests a higher degree than *fairly*:

The plot is **quite** confusing. I didn't really understand what's happening.

*Quite* can also qualify verbs and nouns:

I **quite** like the book.

It was **quite** a difficult book to read.

When modifying an adjective + noun, *quite* comes before *a/an*:

The film had **quite** a surprising ending.

### pretty

*Pretty* modifies adjectives and adverbs. It suggests a higher degree than *fairly* and *quite* and is slightly more formal:

The tickets were **pretty** expensive.

It's **pretty** unlikely that things will change.

### rather

*Rather* is stronger than *quite*. It modifies adjectives, adverbs, verbs or nouns. It can express disappointment, criticism or surprise.

It's **rather** exciting.

The actors speak **rather** unclearly.

I **rather** liked the book.

The film version was **rather** a disaster.

When qualifying an adjective and a noun, *rather* can come before or after *a/an*:

It was **rather** a short film.

It was a **rather** short film.

### slightly, a little, a bit

*Slightly*, *a little* and *a bit* soften the meaning of the words they qualify. They can qualify adjectives, adverbs and verbs. You can use these words to make a criticism sound less direct:

It seems **slightly** / **a little** / **a bit** long.

She drives **slightly** / **a little** / **a bit** fast.

Note the possible word order:

The ending **slightly** surprised me. → The ending surprised me **slightly**.

*A bit* is more informal than *slightly* and *a little*.

*Slightly*, *a little* and *a bit* can be used before comparative adjectives (whereas *quite*, *fairly* and *pretty* cannot):

The view is **slightly** better from this window.

(don't say The view is **quite better** from this window.)

Use *a bit* or *a little* before a non-comparative adjective.

The meaning is usually negative:

He's **a bit** impolite. (don't say He's **a bit polite**.)

Use *a bit of a/an* before a noun:

He can be **a bit of a** pain.

I've got **a bit of a** headache.

**1 Put the words in the correct order. For one sentence, there are two possible answers because the qualifier can go in more than one place.**

- 1 an easy quite subject it's It's quite an easy subject.
- 2 playing likes she hockey rather .....
- 3 I've a bit stomach-ache got a of .....
- 4 the shop from slightly this are cheaper clothes .....
- 5 I quickly finished my homework pretty .....
- 6 the a rather final triumph was .....
- 7 quite the disappointing film is .....
- 8 tiring was journey it rather a .....
- 9 understand fairly this easy to grammar is .....
- 10 fast he little drives a .....
- 11 that they I win quite hope .....
- 12 the were children hungry pretty afterwards .....

**2 Cross out the qualifier or qualifiers which you cannot use in these sentences.**

- 1 You had *quite* / ~~*pretty*~~ / *rather* a good idea.
- 2 I've got *a bit* / *slightly* / *a little* of a toothache.
- 3 This car is *fairly* / *slightly* / *a little* more reliable than my last one.
- 4 I *fairly* / *quite* / *pretty* prefer fish to meat.
- 5 That was a *rather* / *quite* / *bit* long bus ride over the mountains.
- 6 The meal was *a bit of* / *rather* / *slightly* a disappointment.
- 7 The new student in my class is *fairly* / *pretty* / *bit* intelligent.
- 8 Overall, the situation worries me *slightly* / *quite* / *pretty*.

**3 Rewrite the first sentence using the qualifier in bold.**

- 1 Most children are interested in nature to some extent.  
**quite**  
Most children ..... in nature.
- 2 It was a French film, but it wasn't too difficult to understand.  
**fairly**  
It was a French film, but ..... to understand.
- 3 I'm not very happy about the way things turned out in the end.  
**rather**  
I'm ..... about the way things turned out in the end.
- 4 The width of this table is one centimetre more than that one.  
**slightly**  
This table is ..... than that one.
- 5 I've got a little cough.  
**bit**  
I've got ..... cough.