

Troublesome Translations



For native German speakers, finding the right translation, from German to English or vice versa, can sometimes be a challenge. Here are some examples to help you figure out how to say certain words. And to make sure you keep yourself out of trouble.

Many or much?

There are many examples of people confusing *many* with *much*.

Much precedes uncountable nouns – if you can't make the noun plural, then it's an uncountable noun. *Much* also indicates a large quantity and can normally be replaced by 'some' or 'a lot of'. For example, 'Is there *much* food in the fridge?'

Many precedes countable nouns – if a number can come before the noun, then the noun is countable. It can be replaced by 'a lot of' or 'several'. For example, 'There are *many* snacks in the fridge.'

1. I don't have _____ time, and you don't have _____ money. (Ich habe nicht viel Zeit und du hast nicht viel Geld.)
2. We have _____ friends, in _____ different countries all over the world. (Wir haben viele Freunde in vielen verschiedenen Ländern auf der ganzen Welt.)
3. How _____ did you pay for that car? It looks top of the range. (Wie viel hast du für das Auto bezahlt? Es sieht erstklassig aus.)
4. There are almost as _____ Americans here as there are in California. (Es gibt hier fast so viele Amerikaner wie in Kalifornien.)

Fewer or less?

In the same way, it's easy to mix up *fewer* and *less*.

Fewer is used for countable nouns and *less* is used for uncountable nouns. For example, if there were *fewer* cars in the world then there would be *less* pollution.

1. I wish you would turn off the light, so we could use _____ electricity. (Ich wünschte, Sie würden das Licht ausschalten, damit wir weniger Strom verbrauchen könnten.)
2. This car park is too crowded. I wish there were _____ cars. (Dieser Parkplatz ist zu voll. Ich wünschte, es gäbe weniger Autos.)
3. There are now _____ than five children living in my house, so there is _____ noise than before. (In meinem Wohnhaus leben jetzt weniger als fünf Kinder, sodass weniger Lärm herrscht als früher.)
4. I have _____ pairs of shoes than I used to have but more clothes so there is still _____ room in my wardrobe. (Ich habe weniger Paar Schuhe als früher, aber mehr Kleidung, sodass in meinem Kleiderschrank immer noch weniger Platz ist.)

The solutions are on page 34.