

BBC Learning English – Q & A of the Week

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A Lot of/ a Lot/ Lots 许多

William: Hello everyone and welcome to Question and Answer of the Week. I'm William Kremer.

Yang Li: 大家好我是杨莉，在今天的英国问答节目中我们将回答杭州朋友 Violet 提出的下列问题。

William: Here's her email: Dear Sir or Madam, could you please tell me the difference between 'a lot of' and 'a lot'? Thanks very much. Violet.

Yang Li: 英语短语 a lot of 是很多的意思，a lot 也是很多的意思，那么两者的区别又在哪里呢？What's the difference William?

William: Well, the basic meaning is the same, but the grammar and usage is slightly different. So when we use the phrase 'a lot of' to mean much or many, it is describing a noun. So, to give you an example, I could say "I've spent a lot of money recently". 'A lot of' is here affecting the noun 'money'. It is describing how much money I've spent recently.

Yang Li: I have spent a lot of money recently – 此处的 a lot of 用来修饰名词 money, 是对宾语'钱'作出一种数量上的限定。

William: And there is another informal phrase which means the same as 'a lot of'. Do you know what it is Li?

Yang Li: Lots of!

William: That's right. So I can say "I've spent a lot of money" or "I've spent lots of money", they're both OK. Now the phrase 'a lot' doesn't affect a noun. So if I say "I've spent a lot recently", here 'a lot' isn't followed by the noun 'money' but the meaning is the same.

Yang Li: 经过两个句子的对比就清楚了，a lot 和 lots of 不同，a lot 后面不需要带名词比如 "I've spent a lot recently".

William: That's right. In fact, you can even use 'a lot' by itself.

Yang Li: Really?

William: Yes. Have you learned anything so far, Li?



- Yang Li: Yes, a lot. 收获很大。看，在这句话中 a lot 完全可以独立使用。 I see what you mean, William.
- William: And instead of saying "Yes, a lot", you could say...
- Yang Li: 我还可以更为简单地说, "Yes, lots". 此处 Lots 表达的意思和 a lot 是一样的。刚才我们说过 lots of 后面要跟名词, 不过在使用的時候, lot 还有 lots 应该放到句子的什么位置上呢, William?
- William: Good question. In longer sentences, 'a lot' tends to go at the end of the sentence, and never between a verb and its object.
- Yang Li: A lot 一般都落在句子末尾, 永远不会出现谓语动词和宾语之间。
- William: So for example, I can ask you "Have you seen your friend Sarah a lot lately?" But I can't say "Have you seen a lot your friend Sarah lately?". That sounds strange.
- Yang Li: William 你的句子非常好。实际上我刚才还看见 Sarah 呢, 哎, 要不要听听我俩的对话? I have to say, we used the phrases a lot of and a lot a lot!

Example

Li: Hi Sarah! Do you fancy going for a coffee today?

Sarah: Oh, I'd love to but I don't really have a lot of time today because I'm going on holiday on Monday and desperately need to pack this afternoon.

Li: No problem! But do you really have a lot to pack?

Sarah: Yes, lots! I have a young baby and need to take a lot of things with me.

Li: Ah, it sounds as though you have a lot on your plate today. Hope the packing goes well. And have a wonderful holiday!

Sarah: Thank you!

- William: Wow! You used the phrase five times! That's certainly a conversation with lots of useful examples in it.
- Yang Li: Oh yes. 在以上对话中我们一共使用了五次表示'许多'这个意思的短语和成语。 Shall we have a look at them one by one?
- William: All right. In the first one she said "I don't really have a lot of time today". So that's 'a lot of', which is affecting the noun, 'time'.
- Yang Li: 这句话里的很多用来修饰名词 time, 说明 Sarah 拥有多少时间。 Then I asked her "But do you really have a lot to pack"?
- William: Yes and you could have said, "Do you really have a lot of stuff to pack", but what you said has the same meaning. And then she said "Yes, lots!"

- Yang Li: Yes. As she has a baby she has to take a lot of things with her.
- William: And finally you said this: "It sounds as though you have a lot on your plate today". To have a lot on one's plate is an English idiom meaning lots of things to deal with.
- Yang Li: 是的。英语成语 *to have a lot on one's plate* 就是手里有很多活儿，多的呢都有些吃不消了。
- William: Let's have a listen again to the short conversation between you and Sarah.

Example

Li: Hi Sarah! Do you fancy going for a coffee today?

Sarah: Oh, I'd love to but I don't really have a lot of time today because I'm going on holiday on Monday and desperately need to pack this afternoon.

Li: No problem! But do you really have a lot to pack?

Sarah: Yes, lots! I have a young baby and need to take a lot of things with me.

Li: Ah, it sounds as though you have a lot on your plate today. Hope the packing goes well. And have a wonderful holiday!

Sarah: Thank you!

- William: I must say that both these phrases a lot of and a lot are used by native speakers of English a lot, so it's quite important to know how to use them correctly.
- Yang Li: That's right. If you listen to a lot of our programmes and do lots of exercise your English will improve a lot faster.
- William: Thanks for listening and see you next time.
- Yang Li: Bye bye.