

Less or fewer?

How do I know which one to use?

Can you explain why this sign is grammatically incorrect?



What should it say?

LESS OR FEWER

- **Knowing which word to use can cause some problems. Luckily, it is easily solved. The most common mistake is to use 'less' when 'fewer' would be correct. It is unlikely you would make the reverse error.**
- **Less** is used with things/material that **cannot be counted** or separated into individual parts. You can not count orange juice, sunshine, sand etc.
- **Fewer** is used when things **can be counted** or separated eg sweets, dogs, pancakes.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

I would like

less/fewer custard

please.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

I would like

less/~~fewer~~ custard

please.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

**He decided he
should buy
less/fewer CDs.**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

**He decided he
should buy
~~less~~/**fewer** CDs.**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

**Steve always buys
less/fewer drinks
than the rest of us!**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

**Steve always buys
~~less~~/**fewer** drinks
than the rest of us!**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

**There are less/fewer
hours of sunshine in
the west of England.**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

There are ~~less~~/fewer** hours of sunshine in the west of England.**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

**I would love to be
able make
less/fewer journeys.**

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

I would love to be
able make
~~less~~/**fewer** journeys.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

My dentist told me I had to eat **less/fewer** sweets.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

My dentist told me I had to eat ~~less~~/**fewer** sweets.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

My dad has
less/fewer hair than
yours.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

My dad has

less/~~fewer~~ hair than

yours.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

My dad has
less/fewer hairs on
his head than yours.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

My dad has
~~less~~/**fewer** hairs on
his head than yours.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

Although he was good at saving, he still had less/fewer money than me.

Read the following sentences and decide which word is appropriate:

Although he was good at saving, he still had **less**/~~fewer~~ money than me.

Now can you all explain why
the sign on the left is
grammatically incorrect?



Too easy for you? Try these...

- http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_63.htm