

Some, any and no in English

Some, any and no are quantifiers: they indicate a certain quantity or indefinite quantity. They can also be determinants or pronouns. Other undefined quantifiers are a little more precise (see this lesson here).

SOME

Some is used in affirmative sentences. It indicates that the name it determines has a real existence:

- I would like some sugar with my coffee.
- There's some pizza in the oven.

Some can be used in a questioning sentence, one then expects a positive answer - or if one wants to convince the interlocutor to give a positive answer:

- Would you like some tea?
- Would you like some more information?
- Could you give me some water?
- Could you lend me some money?

⚠ Some + name can also be used to translate 'a certain...' or something vague:

- Some woman is asking for you.
- Some people are driving really dangerously.

⚠ Some + number = 'about' or 'around'

- He lives some three kilometres from here.

⚠ Some can be used to express appreciation:

- He's some singer!
- That's some beer!

ANY

Any is used in negative sentences to indicate that the name it determines has no (or perhaps no) real existence:

- He doesn't have any friend.
- There aren't any eggs in the fridge.
- I didn't buy any.

It is also used in interrogative sentences, when it is not known whether the element to which it refers has a real existence or not.

- Do you have any family around?
- Have you seen any horses in this park?

- Did we get any mail today?

Any can be used to make generalizations:

- Any student can do that.

NO

No equals to *not any*. It's used in sentences with a negative meaning, but with a positive verb:

- They have no alcohol here.
- There are no wolves here.

Some expressions with no:

- No problem
- No comment
- No vacancies (dans les hôtels)
- No entry

Compound words with SOME-, ANY-, NO-

- somebody, anybody
- someone, anyone
- something, anything
- somewhere, anywhere
- nowhere
- nobody, no one
- nothing

REMEMBER

⚠ Compare the following sentences:

- Did you buy some bread? (we are waiting for a positive answer)
- Did you buy any bread? (we have no idea of the answer.)

⚠ With a count in the singular, *some* and *any* do not refer to quantity but underline the indefinite character of the name:

- We'll meet again some day.
- Any car will be better than this one!

⚠ After *some* and *any*, the name may be implied, if it is obvious:

- 'I bought too many cakes. would you like some?' 'No, I don't want any.'