

Less, fewer ★★★

1 There is a dispute about this among native speakers of English



Which is correct?

- 8 items or less?**
- 8 items or fewer?**

or avoid it and put something different, like

up to 8 items?

With numbers, I think the word you choose is optional, and is a good example of The Switch (see link to Definitions, below):

Use **less** with uncountable nouns:

Use **fewer** with countable nouns: (and sometimes **less**)

2 With plural nouns, fewer is often better (though **less** is still common in ordinary speech)

There were fewer people here than I expected.
When it comes to teaching, the fewer students the better.

3 Sometimes it really makes a difference

Less comfortable chairs = “the chairs are (all) not so comfortable.”

Fewer comfortable chairs = some of the chairs are comfortable, some not.

This is about DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR V. PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR
(see link to definitions, below)

Quick check

Complete each sentence with *less*, *fewer* or *fewer/less*:

- 1 “Hurry up, we’ve got _____ time than we thought!”
- 2 “Put _____ water in the kettle, it’s too full.”
- 3 _____ than 10 people showed up for the concert.
- 4 Some people put more effort into their work, and some put _____ effort,
- 5 There are _____ elephants in Africa every year.