

Rather as an adverb of degree

Rather can be used as an adverb of degree. This use of rather is common in British English. As an adverb of degree, rather has a similar meaning to 'quite' or 'fairly'. However, it is more emphatic.

In American English, rather is not normally used as an adverb of degree.

With adjectives and adverbs

When used with adjectives and adverbs, rather suggests ideas such as 'more than was expected' or 'more than was usual'. Unlike too, which is also used to express similar ideas, rather does not have a negative meaning.

'How is your new job?' 'Rather good.' (Here rather is used with an adjective.)

'She speaks English rather well - people often think that she is a native speaker.' (Here rather is used with an adverb.)

With nouns

Rather can modify noun phrases. If there is no adjective with the noun, rather goes before articles. If there is an adjective, rather can go either before or after the article.

He is rather a criminal. (NOT He is a rather criminal.)

That was rather a good idea. OR That was a rather good idea.

We do not normally use rather to modify a plural noun used without an adjective.

Rather can also modify verbs.

She rather enjoys playing with her kids.

I rather think she is making a mistake.

With comparatives and too

Rather can be used to modify comparative adjectives and adverbs. It can also be used to modify too.

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It was rather too much.

It was rather better than I expected.