

ALL and WHOLE

What is the difference between *all* and *whole*?

With singular nouns

We're in luck – *all* and *whole* can be used with singular nouns with the same meaning. Here the meaning is like *entire*:

- *Kelly Brook was with me the whole week.*
- *I was with Kelly Brook all week | all the week | all of the week.*
- *I spent the whole day with her.*
- *Kelly was with me all day.*
- *We stayed at the hotel the whole summer.*
- *We stayed at the hotel all summer.*

Though occasionally you might find native speakers prefer one over the other. The reason for this is that it might be a special collocation or set phrase, which you'll pick up separately when you study specific vocabulary. For example:

- *I can't believe it took the whole hour!*

Here *I can't believe it took all hour* sounds strange to me.

When I checked some specific examples of this on a Corpus, I saw that the word *whole* goes or collocates more with *hour* than the word *all*.

Plural nouns

The use is different when you use plural nouns. For example:

I bought all the chairs.

I've heard all their songs.

All the ships passed quietly through the night.

In the case of using *all* with plural nouns, the meaning is like *every* or *every one of*.

We use *whole* differently:

I took 5 whole days off work.

The report took 9 whole hours to write.

Here the meaning of *whole* is more like *complete*.

Compare:

All villages in the region were affected by the floods. [= every one]

Whole villages were under water. [this doesn't mean every one was under water, just that those which were affected were totally affected by the floods]

Likewise:

All trains will be delayed until further notice. (= every one)

Whole trains were eaten by the metal-loving Monster. (er, you can see this means several or more entire trains)

Uncountable nouns

Which word goes more with *pasta*?

We say *I ate all the pasta*.

Likewise:

He ate all the ice-cream.

He's drunk all the milk.

Other points on using *all* and *whole*

- **with possessive adjectives**

All my life there's been trouble and pain. (my comes after all)

I've been waiting my whole life for a woman like you, Oxana. (my comes before whole)

- **with *the* (definite article)**

I gave away all the money. (the comes after all)

I spent the whole day mowing the lawn. (the comes before whole)

Note here a common mistake:

*They were together **the** whole time (NOT whole time – you need the article here)*

*The monster was so hungry that he ate all **the** cake at Robert's birthday party. (you use *the* to specify which cake he ate)*

- **dictionary terms**

Here, *all* is a determiner.

Whole is an adjective.