

# Decreasing

▶ opposite INCREASING

## 1 to decrease

▼ **decrease** *v*[I] to become less in number or amount:

- *The average rainfall has **decreased by** around 30 percent.*
- *The total number of people who are unemployed has **decreased slightly**.*
- *After radiotherapy, the number of tumours **decreased significantly**.*
- *The effectiveness of the drug **gradually decreases**.*

▼ **go down** *phr v* to decrease:

- *The percentage of fat in our diets has **gone down**.*
- *As a result of the improvements, complaints from customers **went down by** more than 70%.*

### STUDY NOTE: Grammar

▶ **Decrease** is more formal than **go down**.

▶ If you want to say that something 'has decreased', you can say that it **is down**, for example: *Inflation **is down to** 4%.*

▼ **decline** *v*[I] a formal word meaning to decrease. **Decline** is used about numbers or amounts, and also about the level or standard of something:

- *In rural areas, the standard of living continued to **decline**.*
- *Salaries have effectively **declined by** around 4.5%.*
- *The rate of inflation has **declined sharply** in the past year. (=quickly and by a large amount)*
- *Support for the government is **steadily declining**.*
- *The city has **declined in importance**.*

▼ **fall/drop** *v*[I] to decrease, especially by a large amount:

- *The number of tigers in the wild has **fallen to** just over 10,000.*
- *At night, the temperature **drops to** minus 20 degrees.*
- *Profits **fell from** £98.5 million **to** £76 million.*
- *In May, the price of coffee **dropped by** over 20%..*

▼ **plunge/plummet** *v*[I] to suddenly decrease very quickly and by a very large amount:

- *Gas prices have **plunged** 31 percent in less than a week.*
- *Sales of red meat are **plummeting**.*
- *Climate change could cause global temperatures to **plummet**.*

▼ **halve** *v*[I] to decrease by a half:

- *He expects the number of farms to **halve** by 2020.*
- *In 1965, 49% of Canadians smoked. This figure has more than **halved**.*

▼ **diminish** *v*[I] to decrease to a low number, amount, or level. **Diminish** is used about numbers or amounts. It is also used when saying that a feeling becomes less strong, or that something becomes less important:

- *The numbers of fish have **diminished** over the years.*
- *The population of the town **diminished from** 32,000 **to** 9,000 between 1871 and 1913.*
- *The pain gradually **diminished**.*
- *Although Campbell's influence **had diminished**, he continued to speak out against the war.*

▼ **dwindle** *v*[I] to gradually decrease until there is very little left of something. **Dwindle** is used about numbers or amounts. It is also used when saying that something becomes less popular, less important etc:

- *The birds' numbers have slowly **dwindled**, until there are now only about 600 left in the world.*
- *Traffic along the canals **dwindled** during the 20th century.*
- *Support for the theory is **dwindling**.*

## 2 to make something decrease

▼ **reduce** *v*[T] to make something smaller in size, number or amount:

- *The army was **greatly reduced in size**.*
- *The number of serious accidents has been **reduced by** a quarter.*
- *Doctors are urging people to **reduce** the amount of salt in their diet.*
- *Using new technology will help to **reduce** costs.*
- *Washing your hands helps to **reduce the risk** of infection.*
- *The ability to communicate cheaply over long distances has **reduced the need for** workers to commute to offices.*

▼ **lower** *v*[T] to reduce the amount or level of something:

- *It is a basic rule in economics that if you want people to buy more of your products, you **lower** the price.*
- *The voting age was **lowered to** 18.*
- *They decided to **lower** interest rates **by** a quarter of a percent.*
- *The drug is used to **lower** blood pressure.*
- *Some colleges have had to **lower** their standards.*
- *To cool, the motor forces air out of the box, so **lowering** the temperature.*

### STUDY NOTE: Grammar

► **Lower** is used especially in more formal contexts, for example when writing about politics, business, or technical matters. **Bring down** is less formal.

▼ **bring down** *phr v* to reduce something such as prices or costs, or reduce the level of something:

- *They used cheaper materials in an effort to **bring down** costs.*
- *The wage freeze was part of a campaign to **bring down** inflation.*

▼ **cut** *v*[T] to reduce something such as prices, costs, time, or money, usually by a large amount:

- *Companies are constantly looking for ways to **cut** their costs.*
- *Shell is to **cut** the price of petrol **by** 18p a gallon from midnight tomorrow.*
- *The new service will **cut** the journey time from London to Manchester **to** just over 2 hours.*
- *The working week has been **cut from** 39 hours **to** 35.*

▼ **halve** *v*[T] to reduce something by a half:

- *Costs were **halved**.*
- *The new drugs have **halved** the number of deaths among AIDS patients.*

▼ **relieve/ease** *v*[T] to make pain or feelings less unpleasant:

- *Doctors are allowed to give drugs to **relieve pain**, even if they shorten life.*
- *Accordingly, they hired more telephone representatives to **relieve the pressure on** employees who handle customer complaints and inquiries.*
- *Making a joke can help to **relieve the tension**.*

▼ **alleviate** *v*[T] a formal word meaning to reduce pain or suffering, or make a problem less serious:

- *Gentle regular exercise helps to **alleviate the problem**.*
- *Changes in diet can help to **alleviate the symptoms** of the disease.*

### 3 a decrease

▼ **decrease** *n* [C,U] used when something happens less than it used to:

- *There has been a **significant decrease in** the number of deaths from lung cancer.*
- *In August there was a **slight decrease in** the rate of unemployment.*
- *Latest figures show an **overall 27% decrease in** crime in the area since the project began.*

▼ **reduction** *n* [C,U] used when the price, amount, or level of something is made lower:

- *A small **reduction in** costs can mean a large increase in profits.*
- *There has been a **significant reduction in** traffic.*
- *Over the last few years there has been a **dramatic reduction in** (=surprisingly large) the number of people arrested for drink-driving.*

▼ **cut** *n* [C] used when a government or company reduces the price, amount, or level of something:

- ***price cuts***
- ***tax cuts***
- ***pay cuts***
- *The company is planning further **job cuts**.*

- *There have been major **cuts in** government spending on defence.*
- *The state of California introduced new laws requiring **drastic cuts in** (=very big cuts) *air pollution from automobiles.**
- *The bank announced a 1 per cent **cut in** interest rates.*

▼ **drop/fall** *n* [C] used when a number or amount goes down, especially by a large amount:

- *The company reported a 35% **drop in** profits.*
- *Researchers found that the number of trees had gone down from 506 to 261, a **drop of** 48 percent.*
- *Spain has suffered a **sharp fall in** its birth rate. (=a sudden very large fall)*

▼ **decline** *n* [singular,U] a formal word, used when the number, amount, level, or standard of something goes down:

- *There has been a **gradual decline in** the number of homeless people.*
- *Television is often blamed for the **decline in** moral standards in our society.*
- *There has been a **slight decline in** the level of violence.*
- *Four years ago, there were 580 people living on the island, but there are now only 337. That is a **decline of** 42 percent.*

#### 4 when something stops decreasing

▼ **level off/out** *phr v* to stop decreasing and remain at the same level:

- *The population dropped from a peak of 800,000, **levelling off** in 1999 at 650,000.*
- *Latest figures suggest inflation will **level out** at 2.4% after a year at over 3%.*

▼ **bottom out** *phr v* to reach the lowest point, and stop decreasing any more:

- *The decline in car sales finally showed signs of **bottoming out** in September.*
- *There is no evidence that the recession has **bottomed out** yet.*