
A question from Reza in Iran:

What is the difference between fee and fare?

Trudi Faulkner-Petrova answers:

Hello Reza and thanks for your question.

The two words are indeed different so let's first look at the word 'fee'. Fee usually describes the amount of money charged for some professional service like lawyer's fees, or professional advice like counselling fees. Here are a few examples:

*International school **fees** have risen by 5% this year.*

*I have to pay the solicitor's **fees** for helping me make a will.*

*What are the **fees** for a weekly house cleaning service?*

Another example is when you register for a course; there may be a registration fee which pays for your application processing. Likewise if you were to use an agent to help you process a visa application, there would be an agent's fee as you have to pay for their help. Sometimes (well, in the UK at least), a plumber or an electrician will charge you a 'call-out fee'. This is an amount of money that you need to pay just for them to travel to your home and assess the problem. Also if you go to a bank to change money from one currency to another, there may well be a 'fee' for this service.

So what about 'fare'? Well, generally speaking, 'fare' is only used for transport. A fare is payment for a trip on a bus, ship, taxi or train. The passenger pays a fare on public transport. So it is correct to say 'bus fare' but not 'bus fee'. Some examples for you are:

*What's the bus **fare** from here to the city centre?*

*If you travel between 10am and 3pm, you can get half price train **fares** in April.*

*I don't have enough money for the taxi **fare** home.*

So Reza, should I charge you a 'fee' or 'fare' for my professional advice about English grammar?! Yes, I'm sure you've got it by now: a 'fee' of course!

Trudi Faulkner-Petrova has a BA (Hons) in English, Bsc. in Psychology and Cert.TESOL. She has been teaching EFL, EAP and Business English in international schools, businesses and universities in Beijing over the last 10 years. Currently, she is a freelance tutor for ESOL, English Literature, SAT/TOEFL preparation and also works for the British Council as an IELTS and BULATS examiner. She is in the final year of studies for an Msc. in Psychology.