

Word for Word

All of the facts about using *all of* and *both of*



When describing characteristics of groups, authors sometimes are unsure as to whether they should refer to *all of* or *both of* the things or people in question. Differentiating between the two is actually simple: use *both of* for a group of only two and *all of* for a group of three or more. This distinction is especially important if there can only be two items in a set (i.e., both eyes, both legs).

Examples:

We selected **two** mice and injected **both of** them with the study drug.

We selected **eight** mice and injected **all of** them with the study drug.

When reporting on several groups in a manuscript, be sure to keep track of the numbers in the groups to avoid confusing *all of* and *both of*. For example, if you studied five groups of patients but only one group consisted of two patients, be careful to use *both of* rather than *all of* when referring to the two-patient group.

Bibliography

1. Multimedia-English Blog. Every vs all/both. <https://multimedia-english.com/grammar/every-vs-all-both-25>. Accessed December 22, 2020.

—Don Norwood

Image Credit: © [Can Stock Photo / Icefront](#)

© 2022 Research Medical Library, Editing Services.