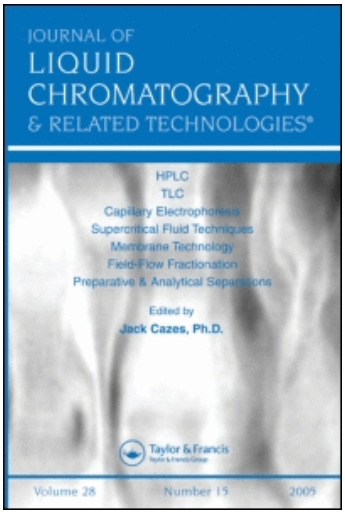


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# Lest We Exaggerate

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## LEST WE EXAGGERATE.....

How often do we run across phrases in technical publications that refer to quantity or degree of ..... which are obviously not quantitative at all, but are merely used to impress someone or emphasize an experimental conclusion? Non-specific terms are used to represent real quantities. One wonders, for instance, how many experts were consulted when an author concluded that, "most authorities agree that ....." I recently came across a list known as Ried's Table that attempts to assign absolute values to non-specific descriptions.

Here's an adaptation of Ried's Table.

| Description | Value |
|---|---|
| One | 1 |
| Only one | 1 |
| A couple | 2 - 4 |
| A few | 3 - 5 |
| Quite a few | 3 - 6 |
| Several | 3 - 9 |
| Many | 3 - 8 |
| Most ("most authorities") | 4 - 6 |
| Half a dozen | 5 - 7 |
| About half a dozen | 4 - 8 |
| A lot | 6 - 10 |
| Quite a lot | 7 - 11 |
| A whole lot | 8 - 17 |
| Ten | 9 - 11 |
| Around ten | 7 - 13 |
| A dozen | 11 - 13 |
| About a dozen | 9 - 15 |
| A bunch | 8 - 15 |
| A whole bunch | 9 - 19 |
| Two dozen | 22 - 26 |
| About two dozen | 21 - 27 |
| A few hundred | 101 - 201 |
| A couple of hundred | 101 - 202 |
| Two or three hundred | 140 - 275 |
| Most | 10 - 20% |
| A majority | 50% + 1 |





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| | |
|---|---|
| A clear majority | 51% |
| A vast majority | 52 - 60% |
| An overwhelming majority | 61 - 70% |
| Almost all | 71 - 75% |
| Practically all | 76 - 80% |
| All | 81 - 85% |
| Absolutely all | 86 - 90% |
| 100% of those tested | 91 - 95% |

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