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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.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Value</u>
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

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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