

Plural & Countable Nouns

A quick guide



First...what are countable nouns?

- Can be used as a **singular** noun *and* a **plural** noun when appropriate
 - Singular - “There **is a** book on the table.”
 - Plural - “There **are some** books on the table.”

Words like *phone, book, student, family, & box* are all examples of countable nouns.

These words can be used in their plural form if there is more than one of the item: phones, books, students, families, boxes.

- Because they have a plural form, **numbers** can go in front of the noun to indicate multiple units of the noun
 - e.g., *two phones, three books, one family, five boxes*

What are uncountable nouns?

- Only used as a **singular** noun.
 - Example: “Do you have money?” vs “Do you have monies?”
 - Because “money” is a singular, non-countable noun, it cannot be used as a plural noun (“monies”).

Words like *money*, *travel*, *water*, *homework*, & *advice* are all examples of non-countable nouns.

- Because they are only used as a singular noun, they cannot be used with a number in front of the noun
 - Example: “five money” vs “five dollars”
 - While *money* is a non-countable noun, the word “*dollar*” is a countable noun. This means it can be used as a **singular** noun (**a** dollar), & a **plural** noun (**the** dollars).

More on nouns

Sometimes plural nouns do not have a singular form. In this case, we'd use a plural verb with the noun. In other words, these nouns are singular in meaning, but take a plural verb.

For example:

- My pants **are** too long.

Here, we are referring to **one** pair of pants. Despite only talking about one pair of pants, the word “pants,” is used with the plural verb “are.” Even though “pants” ends with the letter “s,” there is no singular form of pants. The word “pants” can be used for multiple pairs of pants, or even just one pair of pants.

- The proper way to refer to **a specific** item that happens to be a plural noun is by referring to the item as “a pair of...”
 - Example: “a pair of pants, “a pair of scissors”
 - Non-specific: “Do you have any scissors I can borrow?” Specific: “Can you pass me **that** pair of scissors?”

So...how do you tell the difference?

One trick is to look at the article that precedes the noun.

The words “a”, “an”*, & “the” are articles, and they indicate if the noun is specific or unspecific (“a” and “an” are unspecific articles. “The” is a specific article.)

- Example: “Do you see **the** couch?” “Do you have **a** pencil I can borrow?”

Countable nouns can be used with all 3 articles (“a” & “an” for singular nouns; “the” for plural nouns). **Uncountable nouns** can only be used with “the.”

*Note: “an” can only be used before a noun that starts with a vowel. Example: an **a**pple, an **o**bject, etc.

Examples of the two types of nouns paired with an article:

Examples of *uncountable* nouns with the article “*the*”:

“Do you have *the* money?”

“Can you pass *the* water?”

“Where is *the* milk?”

Examples of *countable* nouns with the articles “*a*” & “*an*”:

“Do you have *a* dollar?”

“Can you pass me *a* bottle of water?”

“I’d like *an* apple, please.”

Examples of *countable* nouns with the article “*the*” (indicating a specific item/thing):

“Can you look at *the* machine?”

“I loved *the* party!”

“Where is *the* dollar?”

What if I want to use a quantifier?

Quantifiers are words like: “some,” “many,” “much,” “any,” “lots of,” “a lot of,” among many others.













These words are used to ***express an amount*** or ***degree*** of something.

We use different quantifiers for different types of nouns!

Quantifiers: Express *a lot*, or *multiple* of something

QUANTIFIER	EXAMPLE	COUNTABLE	UNCOUNTABLE
Many	“I don’t know how many pennies I have.”	✓	✗
Much	“I didn’t get much sleep last night.”	✗	✓
A lot of/lots/plenty	“I brought lots of water.” “I brought a lot of water bottles.”	✓	✓
A number (e.g., majority, minority) of	“A number of Congresspeople voted yes on the bill.”	✓	✗
Several	“I have several dollars on me, if you need any.”	✓	✗
More/most	“May I have some more water?” “I have the most pets out of my friend group.”	✓	✗
A large amount of/a great deal of	“They have a great deal of homework left to do.”	✗	✓
Some	“Can I have some water?” “I have some coins.”	✓	✓

Quantifiers: Express *less, none, or a small amount* of something

QUANTIFIER	EXAMPLE	COUNTABLE	UNCOUNTABLE
Little/a little/very little	“I have very little patience.”		
Few/very few	“I have a few minutes to meet with you on Monday.”		
No/none	“I have no money.”		
A bit of	“I think I have a bit of time to meet before 2 o’clock.”		
Less/least	“I have the least amount of work to do.”		
Any	“I don’t have any time.” “I don’t have any coins.”		

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