**English nouns**

Classification:

**** [**Count nouns**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/english-grammar-reference/uncount-nouns)

**** [**Uncount nouns**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/english-grammar-reference/uncount-nouns)

**** [**Group nouns**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/english-grammar-reference/group-nouns)

**** [**Things with two parts**](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/english-grammar-reference/things-two-parts)

**Count nouns** have two forms: **singular** and **plural**.

**Singular** count nouns refer to **one** person or thing:

a teacher a book a wish an idea

Singular count nouns cannot be used alone. They must have a **determiner**:

the English teacher that book a wish my latest idea

We can use some **quantifiers** with count nouns:

There were **a lot of** people.

How **many** articles have you written?

She has got very **few** friends.

I know **a few** famous actors.

**Plural** count nouns

Plural count nouns refer to **more** than one person or thing:

We usually add –s to make a plural noun:

book > books

school > schools

friend > friends

We add –es to nouns ending in –s, –ch, –sh, –ss, –x and –o:

class > classes

watch > watches

gas > gases

wish > wishes

box > boxes

potato > potatoes

tomato > tomatoes

hero > heroes

torpedo> torpedoes

veto > vetoes (exceptions: pianos, cantos, photos, zeros)

When a noun ends in a consonant and –y, we make the plural with –ies:

lady > ladies

country> countries

party > parties

If a noun ends in a vowel and –y, we simply add –s:

boy > boys

day > days

play > plays

If a noun ends in -f and -fe, we make plurqal with -ves

knife > knives

life > lives

wife > wives

calf > calves

leaf > leaves (exceptions: roofs, proofs)

Some common nouns have irregular plurals:

man > men

woman > women

child > children

person > people

foot > feet

goose > geese

louse > lice

mouse > mice

tooth > teeth

**Uncount** **nouns** (mass nouns)

Some nouns in English are **uncount** nouns. We do **not** use uncount nouns in the **plural** and we do **not** use them with the **indefinite** article **a/an**:

We ate a lot of food. (NOT foods)

We bought some new furniture. (NOT furnitures)

That's useful information. (NOT a useful information)

We can use some **quantifiers** with uncount nouns:

He gave me **some** useful advice.

They gave us **a lot of** information.

How **much** money have you got?

I´ve got **little** experience.

There is still **a little** time left.

Uncount nouns often refer to:

Substances: food, water, wine, salt, bread, iron

Human feelings or qualities: anger, cruelty, happiness, honesty, pride

Activities: help, sleep, travel, work

Abstract ideas: beauty, death, fun, life

Common uncount nouns

Some common nouns in English like information are uncount nouns even though they have plurals in other languages. Examples of uncount nouns:

advice accommodation baggage equipment

furniture homework knowledge luggage/baggage

machinery money **news** traffic

behaviour bread chaos luck

permission progress scenery work

hair information

Let me give you some advice.

How much luggage have you got?

If we want to make these things countable, we use expressions like:

a piece of ... a bit of ... an item of ...

pieces of ... bits of ... items of ...

Let me give you **a piece of** advice.

That's **a** useful **piece of** equipment.

We bought **a few bits** of furniture for the new apartment.

She had **six** separate **items** of luggage.

However, accommodation, money and traffic cannot be made countable in this way. We need to use **other** expressions:

I've lived in three flats/apartments. (NOT bits of accommodation)

Smith received three large sums of money. (NOT pieces of money)

We got stuck in two traffic jams. (NOT pieces of traffic)

Examples of synonymous count and uncount nouns

| **Countable** | **Uncountable** |
| --- | --- |
| dollar | money |
| song | music |
| suitcase | luggage |
| table | furniture |
| battery | electricity |
| bottle | wine |
| report | information |
| day | weather |
| tip | advice |
| journey | travel |
| job | work |
| view | scenery |

In certain situations uncount nouns can be used as count nouns:

I'd like a coffee, please. = I'd like a [cup of] coffee.

May I have a white wine? = May I have a [glass of] white wine?

They sell a lot of coffees. = They sell a lot of [different kinds of] coffee.

I prefer white wines to red. = I prefer [different kinds of] white wine to red.

They had over twenty cheeses. = They had over twenty [types of] cheese.

This is an excellent soft cheese. = This [kind of] soft cheese is excellent.

There is a hair in my soup. = One [piece] of hair.

**NOTE**! Experiences = things that happened to me x experience = practice = uncount

**Group nouns**

Some nouns refer to groups of people, animals or things:

army audience committee company

crew enemy family flock

gang government group herd

public regiment staff team

We can use these group nouns either as singular nouns or as plural nouns:

My family is very dear to me.

I have a large family. They are very dear to me. = The members of my family …

The government is very unpopular.

The government are always changing their minds.

Sometimes we think of the group as a single thing:

The audience always enjoys the show.

The group consists of two men and three women.

Sometimes we think of the group as several individuals:

The audience clapped their hands.

The largest group are the boys.

The names of many organisations and teams are also group nouns, but they are usually plural in spoken English:

Barcelona are winning 2–0.

The United Oil Company are putting prices up by 12 per cent.

and **the police is always plural**:

The police are offering a £5,000 reward.

**Things with two parts**

A few plural nouns refer to things that have two parts. They have no singular form. These are always things we wear:

glasses/spectacles trousers shorts

pyjamas pants boxers

tights jeans knickers

Those trousers are too long.

or implements:

pliers scissors binoculars pincers/tweezers

These binoculars were very expensive.

To make it clear we are talking about one of these items, we use a pair of …:

I need a new pair of spectacles.

I've bought a pair of blue jeans.

If we want to talk about more than one, we use pairs of …:

We've got three pairs of scissors, but they are all blunt.

I always carry two pairs of binoculars.

Some nouns have the same form in their singular and plural number, usually those referring to animals: e.g. sheep, deer, fish.