

## COUNTABLE X UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

Countable nouns are those that can be counted (one flower, two flowers...). Uncountable nouns are those that cannot be counted (bread, beer, sand...). Uncountable nouns take a singular verb (*not water are...*) and are not used with a/an (*not a bread*).

Some nouns which are normally uncountable in English:

Accommodation, advice, assistance, baggage, cash, clothing, courage, dancing, dirt, unemployment, equipment, evidence, fun, furniture, harm, health, homework, housing, information, litter, luggage, money, music, news, pay, permission, pollution, progress, research, rubbish, safety, transport, violence, weather, work...

Therefore: The news **is** good. Money **is** important to her.

**Uncountable nouns can also be countable depending on the context. Compare:**

I prefer coffee to tea. x Could I have a coffee, please? (meaning a cup of coffee)

Helen has got black hair. x There's a hair in my soup!

The building is made of stone. x There was a big stone in my shoe.

Jane isn't very good at sport. x Swimming is a summer sport. (a particular instance of a substance or an idea)

A useful and easier link:

[http://www.grammar.cl/Notes/Countable\\_Uncountable\\_Nouns.htm](http://www.grammar.cl/Notes/Countable_Uncountable_Nouns.htm)

# ARTICLES

## 1) We can use **a/an** for singular countable nouns such as:

- I have a brother. He drives a car. (Meaning one)
- He is a good person. Mandarin Chinese is an international language. (To describe someone or something or to say what type of thing someone or something is)
- He works as an assistant. (A/an used for talking about someone's job)
- He has a cat and a dog. The cat is a bit fat. (A/an used for talking about somebody or something for the first time.)
- once a week, half an hour...

## 2) We use **the**:

- Could you pass me the salt? He is the man I was talking about the other day. (We refer to something specific – the salt on the table)
- Have you ever been to the North Pole? Paris is the capital of France. (We use the when something or somebody is unique)
- the weather, the climate, the human race, the atmosphere, the sea, the public, the environment, the sky, the ground, the wind, the future, the past (General expressions to be learnt by heart)
- the cheapest, the most expensive (We use the before a superlative adjective)
- He has a cat and a dog. The cat is a bit fat. (The used for talking about somebody or something already mentioned).
- We went on holiday. **The** hotel (the hotel we stayed in) was small but **the** food (the food we ate) was all right. (It is clear from the context that we mean something specific)
- The importance of good relationships, the art of communication (**The** is often used with nouns before a phrase beginning of...)
- The computer is a useful research tool. The telephone was invented by Bell. (**The** can be used for a singular countable noun to talk about general features)
- the poor, the young (chudí, mladí - groups of people)

## Context is also important:

There is a man waiting outside the house. (We do not know what man)  
The man is waiting outside the house. (The man who bothered us last time)

- the Guardian (newspapers), the Odeon (cinemas), the Empire (theatres), the Louvre (museums), the Mary Rose (ships), the United Nations (organisations)

### 3) We use zero article:

- Teachers tend to be patient. Dogs are friendly. (When we talk about people or things in general, all teachers, all dogs)

- To have breakfast, lunch, dinner

- By train/ferry/car/ (by + means of transport)

- Oxford Street, Penny Lane (streets) but **the** M6 (motorways)

- English, Chinese, Spanish (languages) but **the** English language

- Trafalgar Square (squares)

- London Bridge (bridges) but **the** Golden Gate Bridge

- Hyde Park (parks)

- King's Cross (railway stations)

## ARTICLES AND GEOGRAPHY

1) **Continents** - no article; e.g. Asia, Europe, South America

2) **Countries** - one word names = no article; e.g. China with political descriptions (Republic, Kingdom, States...) use articles; e.g. *The People's Republic of China*, *The United Kingdom*, the United States of America with plurals use "the"; e.g. the Philippines, the Netherlands with compass directions do not use 'The'; e.g. North Korea

3) **Cities, towns and villages** - no articles; e.g. Prague, Telč, Světlá

4) **Islands** - single islands = no article; e.g. Sicily, Bermuda, Tasmania  
**Islands** - groups of islands = "the" + plural; e.g. the Canaries, the Bahamas

- 5) **Mountains** - single mountains = no article; e.g. Yellow Mountain, Mount Everest  
**Mountain ranges** = "the" + plural; e.g. the Himalayas
- 6) **Lakes** - usually no articles; e.g. Lake Superior (exception: The West Lake, "West" is an adjective)
- 7) **Other Water features** - use "the"; e.g. the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea, the Pearl River.
- 8) **Deserts** – use the, e.g. the Sahara, the Gobi Desert

! We say: in the north of Island x northern Ireland

Retrieved from: <http://www2.elc.polyu.edu.hk/cill/exercises/Articles&Geography.htm#1d>

To practise: the same link as above

## Reference words

### Another, the other, the others, others

Can I have another piece of cake? (singular)  
Where are the other students? (concrete students)  
Where are the others? (without a noun)  
He struggled to talk to others. (other people, in general)

### One, the one, the ones, ones

Can I have a white one? (out of more chocolates in the box)  
Can I have the white one? (there is just one white chocolate)  
Can I have the white ones? (all of the white chocolates)  
I like white ones. (white chocolates in general)

### So x such

Sheila is so gifted that she is bound to succeed. (so + adjective)  
Sheila is such a gifted person that she is bound to succeed. (such + noun)

## **Be careful. We do not always have such a:**

Such beautiful weather! (weather is uncountable)

These are such nice puppies. (plural)

## **A few x a little**

I have a few friends. (several) x I have few friends. (I would like to have more)

I have a little time so I can help you. x I am sorry but I have little time right now.

## **Neither x either x none x both x all x no**

Neither + either + both (for two people or things)

I have two sisters, neither of whom is/are married.

I have three sisters, none of whom is/are married.

Which do you prefer, the red one or the blue one? I don't like either. / I like them both.

None of the parcels has/have arrived. (has more formal)

There were no biscuits left. I ate all of them. (I ate them all)

## **Every x each**

Often interchangeable.

Each/every ticket costs 38 pounds.

When we are talking about a large group with an indefinite number of things or people in it we use every: Every new car now has to be fitted with seat belts.

## **Much x many**

I don't have much time. How much time do you have? (-, ? for uncountable nouns)

We don't have many eggs. How many do we need? (-, ? for countable nouns)

## **So am I x Neither am I**

I am tired. So am I. Já také.

I am not tired. Neither am I. Já také ne.

He helps his mum. So does his sister. A jeho sestra také.

He doesn't talk back. Neither does his sister. Neodmlouvá. A jeho sestra také ne (ani jeho sestra).

Po SO i NEITHER je kladný tvar slovesa. SO následuje po kladných větách ve smyslu já/on apod. také. NEITHER následuje po záporných větách ve smyslu já/on apod. také ne.

For further information please see Advanced Grammar in Use by Hewings.