

Countable, uncountable nouns

Countable Nouns

The major division of English nouns is into "countable" and "uncountable".

Countable nouns are things that we can count:

- dog, cat, animal, man, person
- bottle, box, litre
- coin, note, dollar
- cup, plate, fork
- table, chair, suitcase, bag

Countable nouns can be singular or plural:

- My **dog is** playing.
- My **dogs are** hungry.

We can use the indefinite article **a/an** with countable nouns:

- **A** dog is **an** animal.

Countable nouns are also called "count nouns".

When a countable noun is singular, we must use a word like **a/the/my/this** with it:

- I want **an** orange. (~~not I want orange.~~)
- Where is **my** bottle? (~~not Where is bottle?~~)

When a countable noun is plural, we can use it alone:

- I like oranges.
- Bottles can break.

We can use **some** and **any** with countable nouns:

- I've got **some** dollars.
- Have you got **any** pens?
- I haven't got **any** pens.

We can use **few**, **a few** and **many** with countable nouns:

- I've got **few** friends.
- I've got **a few** dollars.

- I haven't got **many** pens.

Unlike countable nouns, **uncountable nouns** are substances, concepts etc that we cannot divide into separate elements:

- music, art, love, happiness
- advice, information, news
- furniture, luggage, damage
- news, progress
- rice, sugar, butter, water
- electricity, gas, power
- money, currency

We usually treat uncountable nouns as singular. We use a singular verb. For example:

- **This** news **is** very important.
- Your luggage **looks** heavy.

We do not usually use the indefinite article **a/an** with uncountable nouns. We cannot say "an information" or "a music". But we can say **a "something" of**:

- **a piece of** news
- **a bottle of** water
- **a grain of** rice

We can use **some** and **any** with uncountable nouns:

- I've got **some** money.
- Have you got **any** rice?
- I haven't got **any** rice.

We can use **little**, **a little** and **much** with uncountable nouns:

- I've got **little** time.
- I've got **a little** money.
- I haven't got **much** rice.

Uncountable nouns are also called "mass nouns".

Here are some more examples of countable and uncountable nouns:

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

Partitive Structure with Uncountable Nouns

We can use the same uncountable noun in different partitive expressions with different meanings. For example, **a loaf of bread** and **a slice of bread** are partitive expressions with different meanings. A **loaf** of bread is what we call a whole unit of bread that we buy from a baker. A **slice** of bread is what we call a smaller unit of bread *after* it has been cut from a loaf.

Here are some more examples:

- Don't forget to buy **a bag of rice** when you go shopping.
- Can I have **one cup of coffee** and **two cups of tea**.
- The police found **some items of clothing** scattered around the floor.
- I need a truck that will take at least **three pieces of furniture**.
- You'd think **a tablespoon of honey** would be more than enough.

Adapted from: <https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/nouns-countable-un.htm>