

University of Tikrit

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Countable Nouns and un Countable Nouns

Head way

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1)What is a countable noun?

A *countable noun*, also called a *count noun*, is “a noun that typically refers to a countable thing and that in English can be used in both the singular and the plural and can be preceded by the indefinite article a or an or by a number.”

Basically, if it is possible to count something, that something is referred to by a countable noun. Countable nouns can be either singular nouns or plural nouns. For example, the nouns *apple*, *monkey*, and *chairs* are countable nouns. You can count that you have one *apple* in a basket, that there are three *monkeys* at the zoo, or that a concert has 987 *chairs*.

Something to remember about countable nouns is they almost always use an article when they are singular. For example, you wouldn't say *I found dime* or *Cat ate food*. Instead, you would say *I found a dime* or *My cat ate her food*. However, countable nouns can be used alone when they are plural as in

I wore shoes or *She loves dogs*.

Countable nouns may sound simple, but sometimes things can get tricky. Depending on how they are used, some words may be countable nouns in some instances but not in others. For example, the word *nickel* is a countable noun

when it refers to a coin, but it is not a countable noun when it refers to the chemical element. You can have *five nickels* in your pocket, but we don't have *five nickels* in a chemical compound. As another example, the word *fly* is either a countable noun or a verb (which isn't a type of noun at all!) depending on context.

2) Countable noun examples

Like most nouns, countable nouns can refer to people, animals.

People and animals

The words we use to refer to people and animals are all countable nouns. It is possible to count even very small animals and living things like *dust mites* or *bacteria*. Remember, countable nouns can be singular or plural.

People: woman, men, girl, boys, enbies, astronaut, pirates, ninja, friends, people, hero, champions

Animals: dogs, cat, pet, bird, herd, wasps, swarm, insect.

3) What is an uncountable noun

Uncountable nouns (or mass nouns) refer to things you can't count individually, like liquids (water, milk), substances (sugar, sand), abstract ideas (love, happiness, information, advice), or collections treated as a whole (furniture, luggage, homework). They don't use 'a/an', typically don't have plural forms (e.g., *furniture*, not *furnitures*), use singular verbs (e.g., *the news is*), and are quantified with words like *much*, *some*, *any*, or *a lot of*, or by adding countable units like *a cup of tea* or *a piece of advice*.

4) Key Characteristics

- **Cannot be counted:** You can't say "one water, two waters" (unless ordering a *bottle of water*).
- **No 'a/an' or numbers:** Don't use a or a directly before them (e.g.,) I need advice / not I need an advice.
- **Singular form:** They usually stay singular and take singular verbs (e.g., *The equipment is new*, not *are*).
- **Quantifiers:** Use *much*, *little*, *some*, *any*, *a lot of*, *a bit of* (e.g., *much money*, *some information*).
- **Units:** Use *a [unit] of* to count them (e.g., *a loaf of bread*, *a grain of rice*).

5) Examples by Category

Liquids/Gases/Powders: water, milk, air, rice, sugar, sand.

Abstract Ideas/Feelings: love, anger, knowledge, beauty, research, permission, safety.

Collections/Substances: furniture, luggage, homework, equipment, traffic, hair.

Information/News: information, news, research, evidence.

crustaceans, larva, fish

6) Differences between Countable and an Uncountable Nouns

Countable nouns are things you can count (e.g., *apple, book*) and have singular/plural forms, taking words like "many," "few," "a/an," and "one, two," while uncountable nouns are substances, concepts, or masses you can't count individually (e.g., *water, love, advice*) and only take singular verbs, using quantifiers like "much," "little," "some," or units of measurement ("a cup of").

Here's a breakdown of the key differences:

Countable Nouns

- **Definition:** Items that can be counted as individual units.
- **Forms:** Have singular (e.g., *dog*) and plural (e.g., *dogs*) forms.
- **Articles:** Can use 'a' or 'an' (e.g., *a cat*).
- **Numbers:** Can be used with numbers (e.g., *three chairs*).
- **Quantifiers:** Use 'many,' 'few,' 'several,' 'a number of'.
- **Questions:** Ask "How many?" (e.g., *How many apples?*).
- **Examples:** *Table, idea, person, car, hour*.

Uncountable Nouns

- **Definition:** Substances, concepts, or masses that cannot be counted as individual items.
- **Forms:** Do not have plural forms (e.g., no *waters, advices*).
- **Articles:** Do not use 'a' or 'an'.
- **Numbers:** Cannot be used with cardinal numbers.

- **Quantifiers:** Use 'much,' 'little,' 'a lot of,' 'some,' 'a great deal of'.
- **Questions:** Ask "How much?" (e.g., *How much water?*).
- **Examples:** *Water, sugar, knowledge, advice, air, happiness, news.*

Key Takeaway: If you can put a number before it and make it plural (one chair, two chairs), it's countable; if you can't (one water, two waters), it's uncountable.