



2 Nouns II: Countable and Uncountable



Revision

You know that a noun which refers to *one* thing or person is said to be in the *singular number*, and when a noun refers to *more than one* thing or person of the same kind, it is said to be in the *plural number*.

1. Most common nouns, therefore, have a singular form and a plural form.
2. Proper nouns are not usually used in the plural. You will learn the use of the plural forms of proper nouns in higher classes.
3. Some nouns have the same form for both the plural and the singular:

A deer is a gentle animal.

I have seen many deer when I went to the Sunderbans.

Some such nouns are *sheep, aircraft, furniture, Chinese*.



A State the **number** of each of the underlined **nouns**:

1. Man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.
2. The Trojan War lasted for ten years.
3. The children have gone to the zoo.
4. Some of the women had babies in their arms.
5. Geese cackle and donkeys bray.
6. My uncle's library is full of books.
7. You must learn how to arrange knives, forks and spoons on a table.
8. As darkness fell, the hunters could hear the wolves howling.
9. We had only boiled potatoes and rice for dinner.
10. It was so hot that people were using their handkerchiefs as fans.





More about Singular and Plural Nouns

1. Some nouns are always treated as plural, e.g. *cattle, police*.
2. The noun *clothes* (= dress; the plural of *cloth* is *cloths*) has no singular form.
3. Some nouns are always used in the plural, for they are the names of things that are made up of two parts that are joined together: *shorts, trousers, pyjamas, glasses, jeans, binoculars, scissors, pants, spectacles*.
4. The plural forms of some nouns sometimes have meanings different from those of their singular forms:
arm = a limb of the body
arms = weapons
manner = the way something is done/happens
manners = behaviour
green = the name of a colour
greens = vegetables
new = something that did not exist before
news = newly received or noteworthy information
5. Though the names of certain diseases, subjects of study or sports have a plural form, they are treated as singular:
mathematics, physics, measles, mumps, diabetes, economics, cards, darts, billiards



Countable and Uncountable Nouns

In the case of some common nouns, we can clearly mention *how many* of the same kind of thing or person we are talking about:

two men thirty sheep five thousand rupees

Such nouns are known as **countable nouns**.

But there are some common nouns which are the names of things or persons that cannot be counted, like *water, milk, weather, music, youth*, etc. We cannot say, 'I want one water' or 'Let me have two milk'.

Such nouns are known as **uncountable nouns**.

Note the difference between (i) a common noun that has the same form for both the singular and the plural, and (ii) an uncountable noun.

In the case of (i), we can say: one sheep two sheep
 one aircraft two aircraft

But in the case of (ii), we cannot use a definite number before the noun, we cannot say: one water two water
 one milk two milk

To sum up:

Nouns that are the names of things, people, etc. which can be counted are known as **countable nouns**.

They usually have singular and plural forms.

Nouns that are the names of things, people, etc. which cannot be counted are known as **uncountable nouns**.

Most of them do not have plural forms and we cannot use definite numbers before them.

Given below is a list of some commonly used uncountable nouns:

advice	coffee	equipment	help	music	silence
anger	courage	fear	ice	oil	snow
baggage	cream	food	knowledge	peace	sugar
beauty	dust	fun	love	pity	tea
bread	earth	furniture	luck	pride	water
coal	energy	health	magic	sand	weather

B State whether the underlined **nouns** are **countable** or **uncountable**:

1. The doctor has asked Raman to keep away from both salt and sugar.
2. Bina loves to play basketball.
3. Our cook uses too much oil and butter in his cooking.
4. He ate his soup with a spoon.
5. The man spent all his money on books and lived happily in poverty.
6. John bought a new car and took us all for a ride.
7. I am very fond of rice and have it at every meal.

8. Drinking too much coffee or tea is not good for your health.
9. No living being can survive without air.
10. He does not like bread or butter.
11. He put some toothpaste on his brush and walked into the bathroom.
12. Oil and water do not mix easily.
13. Ramen met with an accident and there was blood all over his clothes.
14. Luck was on his side and he won a lot of prizes at the fair.
15. There was no electricity in the town because of the floods.
16. The weather was fine and we spent the day sitting in the garden.
17. When you listen to good music, you lose all sense of time.
18. He had eggs and toast for breakfast, meat at lunch and milk at bedtime.
19. There was no space in the drawing room and so they put the television set in the bedroom.
20. The sand on the beach was clean and golden in colour.



Uncountable Nouns: Quantity

In completing the above exercise, you must have noticed that:

1. Sometimes we use a word or words with some uncountable nouns to give an idea of *quantity*, that is, *how much*:
no electricity some toothpaste all his money too much coffee
 You must remember that these words give us only an idea of quantity—*little, some, much*—but not the *exact number* or *count*.
2. With some uncountable nouns, we can use a word or words to give an idea of *quality* (*of what kind*):
bad luck foul weather good tea

3. The article *the* can be used with both countable and uncountable nouns:

Countable: *The **boy** worked very hard to finish the **task** in time.*

*The **boys** worked very hard to finish the **tasks** in time.*



Uncountable: *The **water** in the kettle was boiling.*

4. The articles *a* or *an*, however, can be used only with countable nouns, because in such cases, *a* or *an* means 'one' which is a definite number:

*We saw a **man** walking down the road.*

*The children were thrilled when they were taken for a ride on an **elephant**.*

C Choose the **correct forms** of the **words** from those given in brackets and rewrite the following sentences:

1. Little (baby, babies) usually drink (milk, milks).
2. Seeing so much (blood, bloods), Rita fainted.
3. The (van, vans) were waiting to collect the (luggage, luggages) of the passengers.
4. You must produce a letter from your parent to explain your frequent (absence, absences).
5. I hate (noise, noises) and so do not like loud (music, musics).
6. People believe that if you drink the (water, waters) of this river, you will never suffer from any (illness, illnesses).
7. Can you lend me some (book, books) to read? I have so much spare (time, times) that I do not know what to do.
8. Thank you for all the (help, helps) you gave me when I was in (trouble, troubles).
9. Rita has cut her (hair, hairs) very short.
10. The children had great (fun, funs) watching the puppet show.
11. John's friends wished him good (luck, lucks) in his new business.



12. There is plenty of (food, foods) in the fridge and you can eat as much as you like.
13. Rahul spent all his (energy, energies) at the gymnasium and had none left for his (study, studies).
14. The man said that (poverty, poverties) had made him steal the (money, moneys).
15. In winter, the streets of this city are covered with (snow, snows).

D Use the words in the box below to fill in the blanks given before the underlined **uncountable nouns** to give an idea of **quantity** or **quality**:

all	any	little	lot	much	no	some
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1. Did you drink milk today?
2. How rice did he eat at lunch?
3. She had so time to study during the day that she had to stay up most of the night, reading and writing.
4. My uncle likes to drink coffee with a of sugar in it.
5. Would you like to listen to music?
6. There is a saying that news is good news.
7. The parents were very anxious, for they had received information regarding their son.
8. Would you like bread with your mutton stew?
9. his luggage was stolen and he had no clothes to wear the next day.
10. Though he is very rich, he refuses to pay part of the money he owes me.

