

Countable nouns with **a/an** and **some**

A

Countable nouns can be *singular* or *plural*:

a dog	a child	the evening	this party	an umbrella
dogs	some children	the evenings	these parties	two umbrellas

Before singular countable nouns you can use **a/an**:

- ☐ Bye! Have a nice **evening**.
- ☐ Do you need **an umbrella**?

You cannot use singular countable nouns alone (without **a/the/my** etc.):

- ☐ She never wears **a** hat. (*not* She never wears hat)
- ☐ Be careful of **the** dog. (*not* Be careful of dog)
- ☐ What **a** beautiful day!
- ☐ I've got **a** headache.

B

We use **a/an** ... to say what kind of thing something is, or what kind of person somebody is:

- ☐ That's a **nice table**.

In the plural we use the noun alone (*not* some ...):

- ☐ Those are **nice chairs**. (*not* some nice chairs)

Compare singular and plural:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A dog is an animal . | <input type="checkbox"/> Dogs are animals . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm an optimist . | <input type="checkbox"/> We're optimists . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tom's father is a doctor . | <input type="checkbox"/> Most of my friends are students . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you a good driver ? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are they good students ? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jane is a really nice person . | <input type="checkbox"/> Jane's parents are really nice people . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What a lovely dress ! | <input type="checkbox"/> What awful shoes ! |

We say that somebody has **a long nose** / **a nice face** / **blue eyes** / **small hands** etc. :

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jack has a long nose .
(<i>not</i> the long nose) | <input type="checkbox"/> Jack has blue eyes .
(<i>not</i> the blue eyes) |
|---|---|

Remember to use **a/an** when you say what somebody's job is:

- ☐ Sandra is **a nurse**. (*not* Sandra is nurse)
- ☐ Would you like to be **an English teacher**?

C

You can use **some** with plural countable nouns. We use **some** in two ways.(1) **Some** = a number of / a few of / a pair of:

- ☐ I've seen **some** good **movies** recently. (*not* I've seen good movies)
- ☐ **Some** **friends** of mine are coming to stay at the weekend.
- ☐ I need **some** new **sunglasses**. (= a new pair of sunglasses)

Do not use **some** when you are talking about things in general (see Unit 75):

- ☐ I love **bananas**. (*not* some bananas)
- ☐ My aunt is a writer. She writes **books**. (*not* some books)

(2) **Some** = some but not all:

- ☐ **Some** **children** learn very quickly. (but not all children)
- ☐ Tomorrow there will be rain in **some** **places**, but most of the country will be dry.