

28 Uncountable nouns ending in -ics

Activity A

There are a number of uncountable nouns in English that end in -ics, and they often relate to fields of expertise. Match each noun in column A with one of the meanings in column B. Then choose four suitable nouns to complete the sentences that follow. Check your answers in the dictionary.

Match the nouns and their meanings:

| A: NOUN | B: MEANING |
|------------------|--|
| 1 athletics | a the branch of medicine that deals with injuries and diseases of the bones or muscles |
| 2 ballistics | b the scientific study of language or of particular languages |
| 3 cybernetics | c the science that deals with the relations between heat and other forms of energy |
| 4 geophysics | d the scientific study of things that are shot or fired through the air, such as bullets and missiles |
| 5 linguistics | e the scientific study of communication and control systems, which involves comparing human and animal brains with machines and electronic devices |
| 6 orthopaedics | f sports that people compete in, such as running and jumping |
| 7 phonics | g a method of teaching people to read based on the sounds that letters represent |
| 8 thermodynamics | h the scientific study of the physics of the earth, including its atmosphere, climate and magnetism |

Complete the sentences using a noun from column A:

- 1 We believe that our colleagues in _____ will be able to identify the gun that the bullet was fired from.
- 2 Young children in UK primary schools are taught _____ to help them learn to read.
- 3 I am so proud that my country won three Olympic gold medals in _____.
- 4 Her son has just graduated with a degree in _____ and will shortly begin work as a specialist at Royal College Hospital.

Activity B

We have said that all these nouns are uncountable. Read the following correct sentences. Why is it possible to use a determiner (a/the/few)? Check your answer in the key and check the meanings of the nouns in bold in the dictionary if necessary.

- 1 She has just started a **gymnastics** course, which involves using equipment such as the balance beam and springboard.
- 2 After visiting the **orthodontics** specialist, Paul was pleased with how his teeth looked.
- 3 Few **phonetics** experts would say that there is any difference in the pronunciation of these two words.