



## Nouns

A noun names a person, a place, an animal, a thing, or an idea. Nouns can be plural or singular and can be the subject or object of a verb. For example:

- The **books** are on the **table**.
- **Love** is all you need.
- **John** is in the **garden**.
- **London** is lovely in the **summer**.

Sometimes, it's difficult to know if a word is a noun or another part of speech. For example, in English, the word 'love' can be a noun and it can be a verb. We need to look at how the word is used in the sentence to work out what part of speech it is. Here are some tips. Nouns are often the subject or object of a verb. Nouns often come after an article like 'a' or 'the'. Nouns often come after an adjective like 'red' or 'pretty' or 'big'. Nouns are often used with a determiner like 'this' or 'those'.

### Common and Proper Nouns

There are different kinds of noun. First, we have proper nouns and common nouns.

Proper nouns are the names of people (Julie, Mr Johnson), places (Paris, Africa, California), organisations (Coca Cola, the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford University), work of arts (the Mona Lisa), days of the week (Monday), months (June, October) and festivals (Christmas, Ramadan). In English, proper nouns usually have capital letters at the beginning of the word.

Common nouns are everything else. Words like 'book', 'table', 'mountain', 'love' and 'money' are all common nouns.

### Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Second, there are two types of common noun. These are countable nouns and uncountable nouns. It's really important to know if a noun is countable or uncountable, because it changes how we use it in a sentence.



Countable nouns are things which can be counted like 'table', 'apple' or 'boy'. They usually change their form when we make a plural (they often add an 's'), and can be used with either a singular or a plural verb: one book falls, two books fall.

On the other hand, uncountable nouns are usually things which can't easily be counted, like 'love', 'rice' or 'water'. Uncountable nouns do not make a plural or change their form, and they are always used with a singular verb. We can't say ~~one rice, two rices~~.

However, sometimes there's not much logic to whether a noun is countable or uncountable. For example, 'work' is uncountable but 'job' is countable. 'Trip' is countable, but 'travel' is uncountable. 'Word' is countable, but 'vocabulary' is uncountable. Sometimes, a noun is even different in US English and UK English, like 'Lego' or 'accommodation' (both uncountable in the UK but countable in the US).

Here are some kinds of nouns that are often uncountable:

- Abstract nouns (nouns that talk about ideas): love, happiness, peace, democracy.
- Subjects from school or university: Maths, French, history.
- Materials: metal, wood, plastic.
- Liquids: water, coffee, milk.
- Gases: air, oxygen, carbon dioxide.
- Things that are made up of lots of small pieces: sand, rice, salt.



Here's a list of some uncountable nouns that we often use:

Advice	Could you give me some advice?
Dust	The old table was covered with dust.
Electricity	Electricity runs through this wire.
Equipment	Could you give me a list of the equipment we need for the trip?
Evidence	What evidence is there against John?
Fog	I could hardly see because of the thick fog.
Fun	We had a lot of fun at the party.
Furniture	I really need to buy some new furniture for my new flat.
Happiness	How can we increase our happiness?
Help	The teacher would like some help with moving the chairs.
Homework	How much homework do you get?
Information	Could you give me some information about things to do in London?
Knowledge	He has such a lot of knowledge about history.
Luck	I need a bit of luck!
Luggage	Please put leave all your luggage at the hotel and we'll pick it up later.
Money	How much money do you have in your purse?
News	The news is good! John has passed the exam!
Pasta	I love pasta!
Progress	We haven't made much progress on our project.
Research	Julie is doing research in neuroscience.
Snow	There's been a lot of snow this year.
Spaghetti	Could we have spaghetti with meatballs?
Spinach	She likes spinach with garlic.
Traffic	Was there a lot of traffic in central London?
Vocabulary	Vocabulary is very important in language learning.
Work	Do you have any work to do this weekend?



### **Words that can be both countable and uncountable**

Many, many words can be used in both an uncountable way and a countable way. This is especially true of uncountable food and drink, such as 'coffee' or 'yogurt'. When we're talking in general about coffee or yogurt, the words are uncountable. But, we can use them in a countable way when we mean 'one cup of' or 'one pot of':

- Uncountable: Coffee is my favourite drink.
- Countable: Could you buy two coffees and two teas, please?
  
- Uncountable: My children eat a lot of yoghurt.
- Countable: I bought a pack of six yogurts.

Other words that act like this include: water, juice, salad, curry and cake.

Another way that we use uncountable nouns in a countable way is when we use the word to mean 'a kind of' or 'a type of':

- Uncountable: She loves cheese.
- Countable: That shop sells lots of cheeses (=different kinds of cheese).

Other words that can be used in this way include jam, wood, plastic, bread, metal, fabric.



There are a few words that change their meaning depending on if they are used in a countable way or an uncountable way. For example:

Hair	Countable = one hair Urgh! There's a hair in my food!
	Uncountable = all the hair on a person's head She has very beautiful hair.
Paper	Countable = a newspaper I bought all the papers this morning.
	Uncountable = paper in general Could you give me some paper to write on?
Light	Countable = a single lamp or light bulb The Christmas tree was covered in lights.
	Uncountable = light in general The room was full of light.
Experience	Countable = one event I travelled to Thailand and it was a really great experience.
	Uncountable = when you've done something for a long time She has a lot of experience with children.



## Nouns which are always plural

Some nouns are always used in a plural form and with a plural verb. You can't count them in the normal way. Sometimes you can use phrases like 'one pair of' or 'three pairs of' if you'd like to count them. Nouns like this are often clothes, or tools that have two parts.

Here's a list of words that are always plural:

Trousers	My trousers are too long.
Tights	I need to wear tights with this dress.
Shorts	He bought some blue shorts.
Scissors	There are three pairs of scissors in the drawer.
Tweezers	Could you pass me those tweezers?
Binoculars	She gave me some binoculars.
Glasses (for seeing better)	I've lost my glasses!
Sunglasses	My sunglasses are in my bag.
Clothes	She put her clothes in the suitcase.
Belongings	Whose belongings are these?
Congratulations	Many congratulations!