

Countable and uncountable nouns



What are countable nouns?

- Countable nouns are individual objects, people, places, etc. which can be counted. Nouns are considered content words meaning they provide the people, things, ideas, etc. about which we speak.

*books, Italians, pictures,
stations, men, etc.*

A countable noun can be both
singular - a friend, a house, etc.
or plural - a few apples, lots of trees, etc.

Use the singular form of the verb with a singular
countable noun:

There is a book on the table.

That student is excellent!

Use the plural form of the verb with a countable
noun in the plural:

There are some students in the classroom.

Those houses are very big, aren't they?

What are uncountable nouns?

- Uncountable nouns are materials, concepts, information, etc. which are not individual objects and can not be counted.

*information, water, understanding,
wood, cheese, etc.*

- Uncountable nouns are always singular.
Use the singular form of the verb with uncountable nouns:

There is some water in that pitcher.

That is the equipment we use for the project.

Adjectives with Countable and Uncountable Nouns.

- Use a/an with countable nouns preceded by an adjective(s):

Tom is a very intelligent young man.

I have a beautiful grey cat.

- Do not use a/an (indefinite articles) with uncountable nouns preceded by an adjective(s):

That is very useful information.

There is some cold beer in the fridge.

A list of some of the most common,
easy to confuse uncountable nouns.

- accommodation

advice

baggage

bread

equipment

furniture

garbage

information

knowledge

- luggage

- Obviously, uncountable nouns (especially different types of food) have forms that express plural concepts. These measurements or containers are countable:

water - a glass of water

equipment - a piece of equipment

cheese - a slice of cheese

http://esl.about.com/library/quiz/bl_foodcontainers.htm

The most common containers / quantity expressions for some uncountable nouns:

- accommodation - a place to stay
- advice - a piece of advice
- baggage - a piece of baggage
- bread - a slice of bread, a loaf of bread
- equipment - a piece of equipment
- furniture - a piece of furniture
- garbage - a piece of garbage
- information - a piece of information
- knowledge - a fact
- luggage - a piece of luggage, a bag, a suitcase
- money - a note, a coin
- news - a piece of news
- pasta - a plate of pasta, a serving of pasta
- research - a piece of research, a research project
- travel - a journey, a trip
- work - a job, a position

Some more common uncountable food types with their container / quantity expressions:

- liquids (water, beer, wine, etc.) - a glass, a bottle, a jug of water, etc.
- cheese - a slice, a chunk, a piece of cheese
- meat - a piece, a slice, a pound of meat
- butter - a bar of butter
- ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard - a bottle of, a tube of ketchup, etc.