

NOUNS (3)

Countable vs. Uncountable Nouns (03)

In Context

5 min

What is a countable noun?

What is an uncountable noun?



Can I count animals?

Yes: 1 animal, 2 animals, 3 animals etc.



Can I count water?

No, I cannot.

Countable or not ?

15 min

Countable nouns can be counted, so they can be used in the singular or in the plural.

Examples:

a cat / 2 cats

1 key / 3 keys

the child / a lot of children

Uncountable nouns are either always singular or always plural. We can never use 'a/an' before them.

Examples:

Water is a precious resource. → *It* is a precious resource.

Her *hair* is blond. → *It* is blond.

The *police* are on their way. → *They* are on their way.

These *people* were very nice. → *They* were very nice.

Some nouns can be countable in some cases, and uncountable in other cases.

Examples:

Coffee please! (uncountable)

3 *coffees* please! (countable)

There are real homonyms, but their definitions are different:

Examples:

people (plural of 'a person') / *a people* (a population)

glass (material) / *a glass* (a container)

business (work) / *a business* (a company)

Language Tip: Quantities with Uncountable Nouns

5 min

Because we cannot say 'a/an' before an uncountable noun, we have to use phrases such as '*a piece of*' in order to express the singular.

Examples:

I will give you *a piece of advice*.

This table is the most important *piece of furniture* in this house.

She is asking for *a slice of bread*.

I bought *a bar of soap* for the guest bathroom.

I would like *a glass of water*.

Joe is bringing *a bottle of orange juice*.

For quantities greater than 1, we can use: little, a little, much, a lot of, etc. (see lesson on Quantifiers).

Writing Exercise

5 min

Is the noun countable (C) or uncountable (U)?

1. water: _____
2. money: _____
3. girl: _____
4. child: _____
5. apple: _____
6. justice: _____
7. dog: _____
8. champagne: _____
9. butter: _____
10. flower: _____

Writing Exercise

5 min

Read the text. Then list the countable nouns and uncountable nouns, in the order they appear in the text.

The police are watching a suspect. The suspect is sitting on a bench, drinking water, very close to a bank. He is probably dreaming about the money in the bank. One of the police officers is determined to catch him.

Countable nouns: _____, _____, _____, _____

Uncountable nouns: _____, _____, _____

Reading Exercise with the Instructor

5 min

Give your teacher an example of an uncountable noun to complete the phrases:

1. a piece of _____
2. a slice of _____
3. a glass of _____
4. a bottle of _____

Watch the Video!

10 min

With this video lesson, you will practice countable and uncountable nouns.

Watch the video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v92p3zSsR08&feature=related>

Watch it again and answer the questions:

1. Watch until 1:15. What examples of countable nouns are given in the video?
- office supplies: three _____, four _____, five _____
- animals: five _____
2. Watch from 1:15 to 1:39 and complete the sentences:
" _____ and _____ for example cannot be counted.
_____, milk, water, _____, cheese, _____, and
_____ cannot be counted, at least like this, when they have no specific
form to count."
3. Watch from 4: 49 to 5:18 and complete the sentence:
You can make water countable by using words like: puddles, drips, jugs, tubs,
_____, and _____ of water.

Quiz

10 min

True or False ?

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Some nouns can be countable or uncountable. | true | false |
| 2. All uncountable nouns are always singular. | true | false |
| 3. We can use 'a' before uncountable nouns. | true | false |
| 4. Countable nouns can be used in the singular or in the plural. | true | false |

Match the 2 columns to form the correct phrases:

1. a piece of	a. pizza
2. a slice of	b. cake
3. a glass of	c. chocolate
4. a bar of	d. wine

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Is the noun countable (C) or uncountable (U) ?

1. information: _____
2. music: _____
3. turtle: _____
4. luggage: _____
5. lamp: _____
6. idea: _____
7. electricity: _____
8. cable: _____
9. news: _____
10. tooth: _____