

# Countable and uncountable 1

A noun can be *countable* or *uncountable*:

## Countable

- ☐ I eat a **banana** every day.
- ☐ I like **bananas**.



**Banana** is a *countable* noun.

A countable noun can be singular (**banana**) or plural (**bananas**).

We can use numbers with countable nouns. So we can say 'one banana', 'two bananas' etc.

Examples of nouns usually countable:

- ☐ Kate was singing a **song**.
- ☐ There's a nice **beach** near here.
- ☐ Do you have a ten-pound **note**?
- ☐ It wasn't your fault. It was an **accident**.
- ☐ There are no **batteries** in the radio.
- ☐ We haven't got enough **cups**.

## Uncountable

- ☐ I eat **rice** every day.
- ☐ I like **rice**.



**Rice** is an *uncountable* noun.

An uncountable noun has only one form (**rice**).

We cannot use numbers with uncountable nouns. We cannot say 'one rice', 'two rices' etc.

Examples of nouns usually uncountable:

- ☐ Kate was listening to (some) **music**.
- ☐ There's **sand** in my shoes.
- ☐ Do you have any **money**?
- ☐ It wasn't your fault. It was bad **luck**.
- ☐ There is no **electricity** in this house.
- ☐ We haven't got enough **water**.

B

You can use *a/an* with singular countable nouns:

a **beach** a **student** an **umbrella**

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

- ☐ I want a **banana**. (*not* I want banana)
- ☐ There's been an **accident**. (*not* There's been accident)

You can use *plural* countable nouns alone:

- ☐ I like **bananas**. (= bananas in general)
- ☐ **Accidents** can be prevented.

You can use *some* and *any* with plural countable nouns:

- ☐ We sang **some songs**.
- ☐ Did you buy **any apples**?

We use *many* and *few* with plural countable nouns:

- ☐ We didn't take **many photographs**.
- ☐ I have a **few things** to do.

You cannot normally use *a/an* with uncountable nouns. We do not say 'a sand', 'a music', 'a rice'.

But you can often use *a ... of*. For example:  
a **bowl** / a **packet** / a **grain** of rice

You can use uncountable nouns alone (without *the/my/some* etc.):

- ☐ I eat **rice** every day.
- ☐ There's **blood** on your shirt.
- ☐ Can you hear **music**?

You can use *some* and *any* with uncountable nouns:

- ☐ We listened to **some music**.
- ☐ Did you buy **any apple juice**?

We use *much* and *little* with uncountable nouns:

- ☐ We didn't do **much shopping**.
- ☐ I have a **little work** to do.

69.1 Some of these sentences need *a/an*. Correct the sentences where necessary.

- 1 Joe goes everywhere by bike. He hasn't got car.
- 2 Helen was listening to music when I arrived.
- 3 We went to very nice restaurant last weekend.
- 4 I clean my teeth with toothpaste.
- 5 I use toothbrush to clean my teeth.
- 6 Can you tell me if there's bank near here?
- 7 My brother works for insurance company in London.
- 8 I don't like violence.
- 9 Can you smell paint?
- 10 When we were in Rome, we stayed in big hotel.
- 11 We need petrol. I hope we come to petrol station soon.
- 12 I wonder if you can help me. I have problem.
- 13 I like your suggestion. It's very interesting idea.
- 14 John has got interview for job tomorrow.
- 15 I like volleyball. It's good game.
- 16 Liz doesn't usually wear jewellery.
- 17 Jane was wearing beautiful necklace.

He hasn't got a car.  
OK

69.2 Complete the sentences using the following words. Use *a/an* where necessary.

~~accident~~ biscuit blood coat decision electricity  
interview key moment ~~music~~ question sugar

- 1 It wasn't your fault. It was an accident.
- 2 Listen! Can you hear music?
- 3 I couldn't get into the house because I didn't have .....
- 4 It's very warm today. Why are you wearing .....?
- 5 Do you take ..... in your coffee?
- 6 Are you hungry? Would you like ..... with your coffee?
- 7 Our lives would be very difficult without .....
- 8 'I had ..... for a job yesterday.' 'Did you? How did it go?'
- 9 The heart pumps ..... through the body.
- 10 Excuse me, but can I ask you .....?
- 11 I'm not ready yet. Can you wait ....., please?
- 12 We can't delay much longer. We have to make ..... soon.

69.3 Complete the sentences using the following words. Sometimes the word needs to be plural (-s), and sometimes you need to use *a/an*.

air day friend language letter meat  
patience people ~~photograph~~ queue space umbrella

- 1 I had my camera, but I didn't take any photographs.
- 2 There are seven ..... in a week.
- 3 A vegetarian is a person who doesn't eat .....
- 4 Outside the cinema there was ..... of people waiting to see the film.
- 5 I'm not very good at writing .....
- 6 Last night I went out with some ..... of mine.
- 7 There were very few ..... in town today. The streets were almost empty.
- 8 I'm going out for a walk. I need some fresh .....
- 9 Gary always wants things quickly. He hasn't got much .....
- 10 I think it's going to rain. Do you have ..... I could borrow?
- 11 Do you speak any foreign .....?
- 12 Our flat is very small. We haven't got much .....