

Countable nouns with a/an and some

A Countable nouns can be *singular* or *plural*:

a dog	a child	the evening	this party	an umbrella
dogs	some children	the evenings	these parties	two umbrellas

Before singular countable nouns you can use **a/an**:

- ☐ Goodbye! Have a nice **evening**.
- ☐ Do you need an **umbrella**?

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

- ☐ She never wears a hat. (*not* She never wears hat)
- ☐ Be careful of **the** dog. (*not* Be careful of dog)
- ☐ What a beautiful day!
- ☐ I've got a headache.

B We use **a/an** ... to say what kind of thing or person something/somebody is:

- ☐ That's a nice table.

In the plural we use the noun alone (*not* some ...):

- ☐ Those are nice chairs. (*not* some nice chairs)

Compare singular and plural:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A dog is an animal. | <input type="checkbox"/> Dogs are animals. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm an optimist. | <input type="checkbox"/> We're optimists. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tim's father is a doctor. | <input type="checkbox"/> Most of my friends are students. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you a good driver? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are they good students? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jill is a really nice person. | <input type="checkbox"/> Jill's parents are really nice people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What a lovely dress! | <input type="checkbox"/> What awful shoes! |

We say that somebody has a **long nose** / a **nice face** / **blue eyes** / **small hands** etc. :

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jack has got a long nose.
(<i>not</i> the long nose) | <input type="checkbox"/> Jack has got blue eyes.
(<i>not</i> the blue eyes) |
|---|---|

Remember to use **a/an** when you say what somebody's job is:

- ☐ Sandra is a nurse. (*not* Sandra is nurse)
- ☐ Would you like to be an English teacher?

C You can use **some** with plural countable nouns. We use **some** in two ways.

(1) **Some** = a number of / a few of / a pair of:

- ☐ I've seen **some** good films recently. (*not* I've seen good films)
- ☐ **Some** friends of mine are coming to stay at the weekend.
- ☐ I need **some** new sunglasses. (= a new pair of sunglasses)

Do *not* use **some** when you are talking about things in general (see Unit 75):

- ☐ I love bananas. (*not* some bananas)
- ☐ My aunt is a writer. She writes books. (*not* some books)

Sometimes you can make sentences with or without **some** (with no difference in meaning):

- ☐ There are (some) eggs in the fridge if you're hungry.

(2) **Some** = some but not all:

- ☐ **Some** children learn very quickly. (but not all children)
- ☐ Tomorrow there will be rain in **some** places, but most of the country will be dry.

71.1 What are these things? Use a dictionary if necessary.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 an ant? <i>It's an insect.</i> | 7 Earth, Mars, Venus and Jupiter? |
| 2 ants and bees? <i>They're insects.</i> | |
| 3 a cauliflower? | 8 a tulip? |
| 4 chess? | 9 the Nile, the Rhine and the Mississippi? |
| 5 a violin, a trumpet and a flute? | |
| 6 a skyscraper? | 10 a pigeon, an eagle and a crow? |

Who were these people?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 11 Beethoven? <i>He was a composer.</i> | 15 Marilyn Monroe? |
| 12 Shakespeare? | |
| 13 Albert Einstein? | 16 Elvis Presley and John Lennon? |
| | |
| 14 Washington, Lincoln and Kennedy? | 17 Van Gogh, Renoir and Picasso? |

71.2 Read about what these people do, and say what their jobs are. Choose from:

chef interpreter journalist ~~nurse~~ plumber surgeon travel agent waiter

- Sarah looks after patients in hospital. *She's a nurse.*
- Gary works in a restaurant. He brings the food to the tables. He
- Martina arranges people's holidays for them. She
- Kevin works in a hospital. He operates on people.
- Jonathan cooks in a restaurant.
- Jane writes articles for a newspaper.
- Dave installs and repairs water pipes.
- Linda translates what people are saying from one language into another, so that they can understand each other.

71.3 Put in **a/an** or **some** where necessary. If no word is necessary, leave the space empty.

- I've seen *some* good films recently.
- What's wrong with you? Have you got *a* headache?
- I know a lot of people. Most of them are *some* students.
- When I was *a* child, I used to be very shy.
- Would you like to be *a* actor?
- Do you collect *some* stamps?
- What *a* beautiful garden!
- Some* birds, for example the penguin, cannot fly.
- Do you enjoy going to *some* concerts?
- I've been walking for three hours. I've got *sore* feet.
- I don't feel very well this morning. I've got *a* sore throat.
- Maria speaks *some* English, but not very much.
- It's a pity we don't have *a* camera. I'd like to take *a* photograph of that house.
- Those are *a* nice shoes. Where did you get them?
- I'm going shopping. I want to buy *a* new shoes.
- You need *a* visa to visit *some* countries, but not all of them.
- Jane is *a* teacher. Her parents were *some* teachers too.
- I don't believe him. He's *a* liar. He's always telling *some* lies.