COUNTABLE/UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

Countable nouns describe things we can count.

* concrete nouns may be countable:
  
  There are a dozen flowers in the vase. He ate three apples

* collective nouns are countable:
  
  She attended three classes today. London has many orchestras.

* some proper nouns are countable:
  
  There are many Greeks living in New York.

* countable nouns have a plural form:

  one girl   two girls   (Some words do not use -s for the plural.)

  a party    three parties one man  two men
  one match  a lot of matches  a child  many children
  a cookie   some cookies  that tooth  those teeth

Always use articles when count nouns are singular. Count nouns use articles when they are plural if they refer to a specific group.

Examples:

The guest arrived late. A guest is friendly.

The guests at our house yesterday were noisy.

Guests are always welcome at our house.

UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS describe things we cannot count.

* abstract nouns are uncountable.
  
  Freedom should be treasured. Beauty does not last long.

* some concrete nouns are uncountable
  
  The cost of oil is high. Rice is an important food.
COUNTABLE/UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS (Continued)

Uncountable nouns never take the indefinite article (a/an), although when they are singular, they take a singular verb. The is sometimes used with noncount nouns in the same way it is used with plural count nouns, that is, if a specific object, group, or idea is referred to.

Examples:
Information is difficult to find

The information in the telephone book is correct.

Sugar is expensive.

Please pass the sugar.

Uncountable nouns do not have a plural form; however, many uncountable nouns may be made countable, but the meaning of the word changes.

Examples:
Chocolate is fattening. (uncountable -- all chocolate)

He ate a chocolate. (countable -- one serving in a box)

Then he ate four more chocolates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art imitates life.</th>
<th>The folk arts of Sweden are lovely.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life is precious.</td>
<td>A cat has nine lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper is very expensive.</td>
<td>Where are those important papers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some nouns can be determined as countable or uncountable only in the context of the sentence in which they are used.

Examples:
Life can be hard when you are old. (uncountable -- a generalization)

My grandmother lived a happy life. (countable -- different types of lives, an unhappy life, a useful life)

(over)
Most grammar books list nouns that are regularly uncountable in English. However, someone else's list is never as useful to you as your own. Keep a list of uncountable nouns that you come across as you read and write.

**Quantity Words:** answer the question "How many?" for count nouns and "How much?" for noncount nouns. Some quantity terms can be used with both uncountable nouns and plural count nouns. Others can be used only with uncountable nouns, with countable singular nouns, or with countable plural nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the use of a few and few, little and a little</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With countable singular nouns (girl, child, fact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(very) few</td>
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<tr>
<td>fewer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*With countable plural nouns and with uncountable nouns*

- some
- no
- any
- not any
- a lot of
- other
- lots of