

21 Common uncountable words

A What is countable?



apples

shoes

plates

COUNTABLE (You can count them: 4 apples, 2 shoes)



sugar

money

luggage

UNCOUNTABLE (You can't count it: NOT 3 luggages)

Can I have three apples and some sugar, please?
Are these shoes yours? Is this luggage yours?

B Everyday uncountable words



This furniture is modern.



The traffic is bad today.



I'll give you some advice
about your future.



He can give you some useful
information about Bangkok.



There is some bad
news today.



It's terrible weather today.



Accommodation here
is expensive.



I need some fresh air.



Studying is
hard work.



Air travel is faster
than rail travel.



C Food

A lot of uncountable nouns are kinds of food and drink.



rice



spaghetti



butter



bread



milk



water



tea



coffee

Note: When we want to say how much we want, we say, three loaves of bread, two litres of milk, a kilo of apples.

Tip: When you learn a new noun, write it down in a phrase which shows if it is countable or uncountable.

Exercises

21.1 Fill the gaps with an uncountable noun opposite.

- 1 I'd like to buy a car but I haven't got enough
- 2 Cows give us and
- 3 If you don't know what to do, ask your parents for some
- 4 The at the seaside is very good for you.
- 5 Rob left school last month and is now looking for
- 6 There is always a lot of in central London.

21.2 Match the words on the right with the words on the left.

- | | |
|----------|-------------|
| 1 heavy | information |
| 2 useful | travel |
| 3 bad | water |
| 4 modern | luggage |
| 5 brown | news |
| 6 cold | furniture |
| 7 space | bread |

21.3 Find an adjective to go with the uncountable nouns in the box.

cold weather, British money

| |
|--|
| weather money sugar traffic advice accommodation air work rice spaghetti butter milk tea coffee |
|--|

21.4 Fill the gaps with the correct form of the verb *be*.

- 1 Accommodation in the city centre expensive.
- 2 Spaghetti with Italian tomato sauce very good.
- 3 The weather in Scotland best in the autumn.
- 4 The news better today than it yesterday.
- 5 Work the most important thing in Sam's life.
- 6 Their furniture very old and very beautiful.

21.5 Correct the mistakes in these sentences.

- 1 The news are not very good today.
The news is not very good today.
- 2 Where can I get some informations about your country?
- 3 Let me give you an advice.
- 4 Cook these spaghetti for ten minutes.
- 5 Can I have a bread, please?
- 6 Mary is looking for a new work.
- 7 We should buy some new furnitures.
- 8 The east of the country usually has a better weather than the west.
- 9 We went on two long travels last year.
- 10 I must find a new accommodation soon.

a car / some money (countable/uncountable 1)

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

A

Countable nouns

For example: (a) **car** (a) **man** (a) **key** (a) **house** (a) **flower** (an) **idea** (an) **accident**

You can use **one/two/three** (etc.) + *countable nouns* (you can *count* them):



one car



two cars



three men



four houses

Countable nouns can be *singular* (= one) or *plural* (= two or more):

| | | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>singular:</i> | a car | my car | the car etc. | | |
| <i>plural:</i> | cars | two cars | the cars | some cars | many cars etc. |

- I've got **a car**.
- There aren't **many cars** in the car park.
- New **cars** are very expensive.

You *cannot* use the singular (**car/house/key** etc.) alone. You need **a/an** (⇒ Unit 64):

- We can't get in without **a key**. (not 'without key')

B

Uncountable nouns

For example: **water** **air** **rice** **salt** **plastic** **money** **music** **tennis**



water



salt



money



music

You *cannot* say **one/two/three** (etc.) + these things: ~~one water~~ ~~two musics~~

Uncountable nouns have only *one* form:

| | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| money | the money | my money | some money | much money etc. |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|

- I've got **some money**.
- There isn't **much money** in the box.
- **Money** isn't everything.

You *cannot* use **a/an** + *uncountable nouns*: ~~a money~~ ~~a music~~

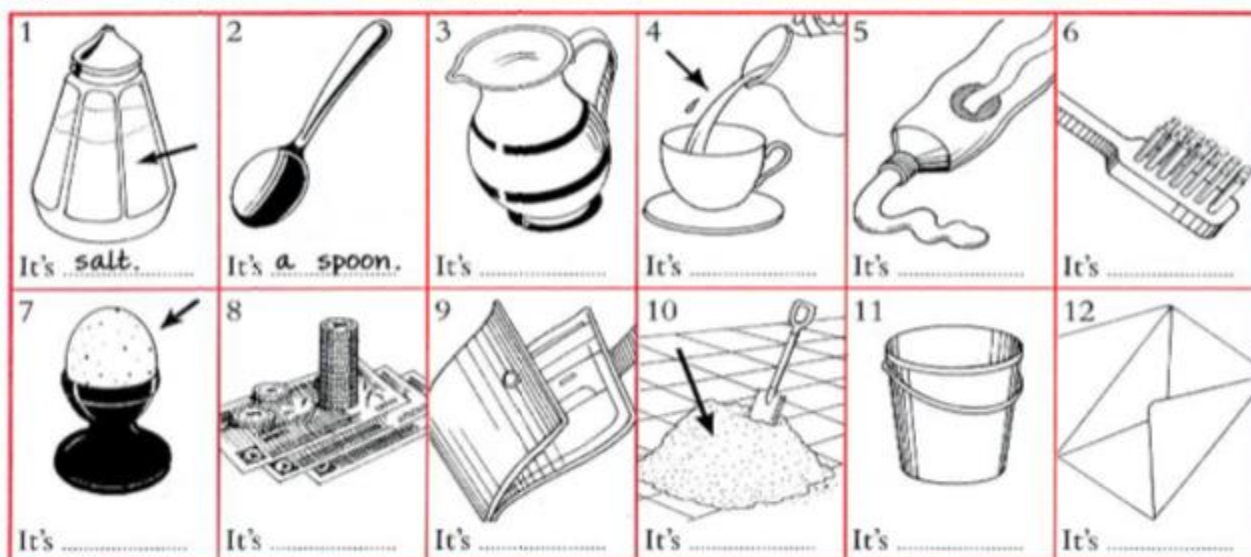
But you can say **a piece of ... / a glass of ...** etc. + *uncountable noun*:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| a glass of water | a can of oil | a bar of chocolate |
| a piece of cheese | a bottle of milk | a piece of music |
| a bowl of rice | a cup of coffee | a game of tennis |

EXERCISES

- 66.1** What are these things? Some are countable and some are uncountable. Write **a/an** if necessary. The names of these things are:

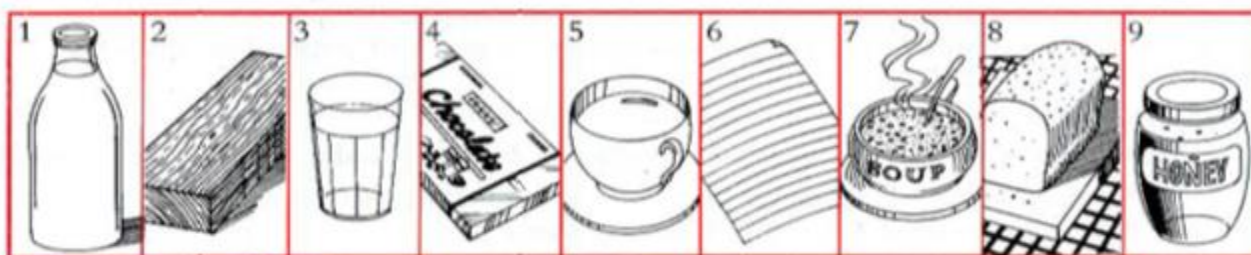
bucket envelope milk salt spoon toothpaste
egg jug money sand toothbrush wallet



- 66.2** Some of these sentences are right, but some of them need **a/an**. Put in **a/an** where necessary.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 I haven't got <u>watch</u> . <u>a watch</u> | 9 Jamaica is island. |
| 2 Do you like cheese? <u>OK</u> | 10 I don't need key. |
| 3 Ann never wears hat. | 11 Everybody needs food. |
| 4 Are you looking for job? | 12 I've got good idea. |
| 5 Mary doesn't eat meat. | 13 Can you drive car? |
| 6 Mary eats apple every day. | 14 Do you want cup of coffee? |
| 7 I'm going to party tonight. | 15 I don't like coffee without milk. |
| 8 Music is wonderful thing. | 16 Don't go out without umbrella. |

- 66.3** What are the things in the pictures? Write **a ... of ...** for each picture. Use the words in the boxes.



| | | |
|--------|-------|-------|
| bar | cup | loaf |
| bottle | glass | piece |
| bowl | jar | piece |

| | | |
|-----------|-------|-------|
| bread | milk | tea |
| chocolate | paper | water |
| honey | soup | wood |

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|
| 1 <u>a bottle of milk</u> | 4 | 7 |
| 2 | 5 | 8 |
| 3 | 6 | 9 |