

Countable and uncountable 1

A

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 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 riceYou 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?

C

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 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.

Exercises

Unit 69

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