Singular and plural

A Sometimes we use a *plural* noun for one thing that has two parts. For example:

trousers *(two legs)* *also* **jeans/tights/shorts/pants**	**pyjamas** *(top and bottom)*	**glasses**	**binoculars**	**scissors**

These words are plural, so they take a plural verb:

- My trousers **are** too long. (*not* My trousers is)

You can also use **a pair of** + these words:

- **Those are** nice **jeans**. *or* That's **a** nice **pair of** jeans. (*not* a nice jeans)
- I need **some** new **glasses**. *or* I need **a** new **pair of** glasses.

B Some nouns end in **-ics**, but are not usually plural. For example:

athletics **gymnastics** **economics** **politics**
physics **electronics** **maths** (= mathematics)

- **Gymnastics is** my favourite sport. (*not* Gymnastics are)

News is not plural (see Unit 70B):

- I have **some news** for you. **It's** good news!

Some words that end in **-s** can be singular or plural. For example:

means	**a means** of transport	**many means** of transport
series	**a** TV **series**	**two** TV **series**
species	**a species** of fish	**200 species** of fish

C Some singular nouns are often used with a plural verb. For example:

audience **committee** **company** **family** **firm** **government** **staff** **team**

These nouns are all groups of people. We often think of them as a number of people (= they), not as one thing (= it). So we often use a plural verb:

- **The government** (= they) **have decided** to increase taxes.
- **The staff** at the company (= they) **are** not happy with **their** working conditions.

In the same way, we often use a plural verb after the name of a company or a sports team:

- **Shell have** increased the price of petrol.
- **Italy are** playing Brazil next Sunday (in a football match).

You can also use a singular verb (The government **wants** … / Shell **has** … etc.).

We use a plural verb with **police**:

- **The police are** investigating the crime, but **haven't** arrested anyone yet. (*not* The police is … hasn't)

Note that we say **a police officer** / **a policeman** / **a policewoman** (*not* a police).

D We do not often use the plural of **person** ('persons'). We normally use **people** (a *plural* word):

- He's **a** nice **person**. *but* They are nice **people**. (*not* nice persons)
- **Many people don't** have enough to eat. (*not* Many people doesn't)

E We think of a sum of money, a period of time, a distance etc. as *one* thing. So we use a singular verb:

- **Fifty thousand pounds** (= it) **was** stolen in the robbery. (*not* were stolen)
- **Three years** (= it) **is** a long time to be without a job. (*not* Three years are)
- **Two miles isn't** very far to walk.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 Complete the sentences. Choose from the box.

1 My eyesight is getting worse. I need ...glasses....
2 The trousers you bought for me ..... fit me.
3 The jacket you bought for me ..... fit me.
4 I need ..... scissors to cut this piece of material.
5 I can't find my binoculars. Have you seen .....?
6 I went shopping and bought a ..... of jeans.
7 Where ..... my sunglasses?
8 I went shopping and bought ..... pair of pyjamas.
9 I don't know much about politics. I'm not interested in .....

a
are
them
doesn't
pair
it
~~glasses~~
some
don't

2 Complete the sentences. Use a word from section B (news, series etc.).

1 'Have you heard the ...news...?' 'No. What's happened?'
2 The bicycle is a ..... of transport.
3 A lot of American TV ..... are shown in other countries.
4 The tiger is an endangered ..... .
5 There will be a ..... of meetings to discuss the problem.
6 Fortunately the ..... wasn't as bad as we expected.
7 How many ..... of bird are there in the world?
8 I didn't have my phone, so I had no ..... of contacting you.

3 Choose the correct form of the verb, singular or plural. In three sentences either the singular or plural verb is possible.

1 Gymnastics is / ~~are~~ my favourite sport. (is *is correct*)
2 My new glasses doesn't / don't fit very well.
3 The police want / wants to interview two men about the robbery.
4 Physics was / were my favourite subject at school.
5 It's a nice place to visit. The people is / are very friendly.
6 Germany is / are playing Spain tomorrow night. Are you going to watch it?
7 Does / Do the police know how the accident happened?
8 Where do / does your family live?
9 Most people enjoy / enjoys music.
10 I like this cafe. The staff here is / are really friendly and efficient.

4 Complete the sentences. Use is or isn't, and choose from the box.

1 Three years ...is a long time... to be without a job.
2 Thirty degrees ..... for Tom. He doesn't like hot weather.
3 Ten dollars ..... . We need more than that.
4 Four days ..... for a holiday. You need at least a week.
5 Twenty kilos ..... . Are you sure you can manage?

a lot to carry
enough money
too hot
long enough
~~a long time~~

5 Are these sentences OK? Correct them where necessary.

1 Three years are a long time to be without a job. ...Three years is a long time...
2 The committee want to change the rules of the club. ...OK (wants *is also correct*)...
3 Susan was wearing a black jeans. .....
4 I like Martin and Jane. They're very nice persons. .....
5 I'm going to buy some new pyjamas. .....
6 There was a police directing traffic in the street. .....
7 This scissors isn't very sharp. .....
8 The company have decided to open a new factory. .....
9 This plant is very rare species. .....
10 Twelve hours are a long time to be on a plane. .....

LIVEWORKSHEETS