

A

Common uncountable nouns

One of the problems with uncountable nouns is that many of them are countable in other languages.

Common mistakes

I need information. (NOT I need ~~an~~ information.) (no indefinite article)

I need some information. (NOT I need ~~informations~~.) (no plural form)

The homework was difficult. (NOT The homework ~~were~~ difficult.) (use with a singular verb)

- You can put all that **rubbish** in the bin over there. [things that you throw away because you do not want them]
- Is there any more **news** about the man who was injured?
- She gave me some good **advice** about buying a car. [what you think someone should do]
- Do the children get **pocket money** [money that parents give regularly to their children]?
- You need a lot of **equipment** for camping, e.g. tent, sleeping bag, torch, things for cooking, etc. [the things that are used for a particular activity]
- We sold the **furniture** [tables, chairs, armchairs, etc.].
- The **scenery** is really beautiful. [the natural beauty you see around you]
- My **knowledge of** Russian is limited. [what I know about it]
- She's worked very hard and I believe she is **making progress** [improving / getting better].
- Can you take the dog? We haven't got any **room** in our car. [empty space]
- Would anyone like some more **toast**?
- The children's **behaviour** was terrible: they were climbing all over the furniture and making a lot of noise. [the way you do and say things]



bin

tent



sleeping bag



torch



toast



B

Uncountable nouns in dictionaries

Dictionaries show countable nouns with a (C) and uncountable nouns with a (U). Some nouns can be countable with one meaning, and uncountable with another.

experience (U) [the knowledge you get from doing a particular job or activity]

She's got a lot of **experience of** working with children.

experience (C) [something that happens to you that affects the way you feel]

I had so many fantastic **experiences** on my trip to Thailand and Japan.

chance (U) [luck]

Lotto is a game of **chance**.

chance (C) [the opportunity to do something]

He's had several **chances** to go abroad, but he's just not interested.

C

Making uncountable nouns countable

You can make some uncountable nouns singular. Sometimes we do this with a word like **piece** (for advice, equipment, toast, furniture, news), but in spoken English we often use **a bit** (*informal*) with most uncountable nouns.

a good piece of advice

an interesting bit of news

another piece of toast

just a bit of rubbish

Exercises

86.1 Correct the mistakes.

- 1 I need some informations. *information*
- 2 Our teacher has a news about the trip.
- 3 She gave me some good advices.
- 4 Her progress are very good.
- 5 We had a lot of homeworks yesterday.
- 6 The furnitures were very old.
- 7 I have no experiences of using these equipments.
- 8 I need to improve my knowledges of this new technology.

86.2 Make the uncountable nouns countable.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 I did some homework. | I did <i>a bit of homework</i> |
| 2 It's useful equipment. | It's |
| 3 It was good advice. | It was |
| 4 Do you want some more toast? | Do you want |
| 5 She's making progress. | She's making |
| 6 There's some rubbish on the floor. | There's |
| 7 I gave them some pocket money. | I gave them |
| 8 I heard some news this morning. | I heard |

86.3 Complete the dialogues.

- 1 A: Have you been given all the details?
B: No, I need more *information*.
- 2 A: She hasn't worked there long enough.
B: No, she needs more.
- 3 A: Is your flat big enough?
B: No, we need more.
- 4 A: Does she know what to do when she leaves school?
B: No, she needs some.
- 5 A: Don't you think the room looks empty?
B: Yes, we need more.
- 6 A: Is his English getting better?
B: No, he isn't making any.

86.4 Complete the sentences. The first letter has been given to help you.

- 1 I asked my teacher for some *a* *advice* about grammar books.
- 2 I've had some great *e* when I've travelled on my own.
- 3 If we give him another *c*, I'm sure he'll be able to do it.
- 4 That stuff over there is *r*; just throw it in the bin.
- 5 We camped on the hill above the lake because the *s* is so beautiful.
- 6 I don't know what's wrong with Celia, but her *b* was very strange this morning.
- 7 Do you have any *e* of working with computers?
- 8 I don't have any *k* of this subject; you'd better ask Fariah.

86.5 Use a dictionary to find out if these nouns are countable or uncountable. Keep a record of them in your notebook.

transport luggage suitcase pasta traffic accident