86 Uncountable nouns

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** (*infml*) with most uncountable nouns.

a good **piece of** advice
another piece of toast
an interesting **bit of** news
just **a bit of** rubbish

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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 *a bit of homework.*
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*dvice* 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

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