

Count Vs. Non-Count Nouns

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Quick and Handy Grammar Review

COUNT VS. NON-COUNT NOUNS

Nouns are a basic part of speech in a language. Nouns are people, places, things, ideas, or concepts. Nouns may function as the subject of a sentence, as the object of a verb, or as the object of a preposition.

A. The Four Types of Nouns

There are four types of nouns in English:

#	Type of Noun	Description	Examples
1	common nouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> words for general people, places, or things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> book window cafeteria teller teacher streets cars remote control police officer
2	proper nouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> names of specific people, places, or things when <i>the</i> is used with a proper noun, <i>the</i> is usually in the lower case (not capitalized) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veronica Chile Seoul Disneyland the Bradens the New York Times Boardwalk Empire Jennifer Lopez Prof. Lenore Sinclair
3	collective nouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> singular words that refer to groups of people or animals either common or proper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> team family committee congress herd (of cows) the Rodriguez family the New York Yankees
4	abstract nouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> words for ideas or concepts (we know they exist, but we can't use our sense of <i>touch</i>, <i>hearing</i>, <i>sight</i>, <i>taste</i>, or <i>smell</i> to find them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> love hate honesty faith freedom patience joy responsibility fidelity dislike loyalty

Quick and Handy Grammar Review cont.

B. Count Nouns

Count (or countable) nouns are simple to count. They may be singular or plural. For singular count nouns, use *a*, *an*, *the*, or *one*. For plural count nouns, use a number, the article *the*, or no article. You may also use quantity words (*a lot*, *a few*, *some*, *many*). Never use *a* or *an* with a plural count noun.

Singular

- a cat
- an orange
- one soldier
- the recipe

Plural

- cats
- two oranges
- 15 soldiers
- the recipes

C. Non-Count Nouns

Non-count (or uncountable) nouns are things that we generally do not count. Non-count nouns always take a singular verb. Do not use the articles *a*, *an*, or *one* with non-count nouns. You may use quantity words (*a lot*, *a little*, and especially *some*). You can use the article *the* if the non-count noun is specific/definite. Certain categories of nouns are usually non-count.

Abstract ideas and feelings	School subjects	Terms composed of tiny parts	Collective nouns referring to things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice • information • beauty • intelligence • faith • joy • freedom • love • happiness • luck • hate • news • honesty • vocabulary • work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biology • physics • criminal justice • psychology • Spanish • economics • statistics • English • health • physical education • writing • mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coffee • rice • flour • salt • sugar • pepper • tea • water • sand • rain • snow • hair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clothing • food • furniture • garbage • money • homework • music • jewelry • equipment • makeup • traffic • mail <p>Note: <i>email</i> is a count noun.</p>



Quick and Handy Grammar Review cont.

C. Non-Count Nouns cont.

Food items	Minerals	Liquids and gases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bread • pasta • butter • soup • cheese • chocolate • fruit • fish • meat • beef 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copper • tin • gold • iron • silver • steel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • air • pollution • fog • wind • beer • soup • milk • water • oil • oxygen

To talk about quantities with non-count nouns, use *a/an/the + measure word + of + non-count noun*. Below are some examples.

Measure Word	Example	Measure Word	Example
bag	a bag of flour	glass	a glass of milk
bottle	a bottle of juice	jar	a jar of honey
bowl	a bowl of fruit	loaf	a loaf of bread
box	a box of cereal	piece	a piece of cake
bunch	a bunch of snow	pound	two pounds of coffee
can	a can of corn	slice	a slice of pie
container	a container of rice	tablespoon	a tablespoon of vanilla
cup	a cup of tea	teaspoon	a teaspoon of salt
gallon	four gallons of water		

Exercise 1

Read the nouns below. Decide if each noun is count (**C**) or non-count (**N**). Write the correct letter next to each word.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-----------|-----|-----|------------|
| ___ | 1. | advice | ___ | 16. | cheese | ___ | 31. | flour |
| ___ | 2. | program | ___ | 17. | economics | ___ | 32. | English |
| ___ | 3. | news | ___ | 18. | boy | ___ | 33. | ocean |
| ___ | 4. | necklace | ___ | 19. | watch | ___ | 34. | leaf |
| ___ | 5. | color | ___ | 20. | rain | ___ | 35. | bag |
| ___ | 6. | orange | ___ | 21. | season | ___ | 36. | sleet |
| ___ | 7. | email | ___ | 22. | trash | ___ | 37. | milk |
| ___ | 8. | hope | ___ | 23. | snow | ___ | 38. | soldier |
| ___ | 9. | ring | ___ | 24. | work | ___ | 39. | child |
| ___ | 10. | file | ___ | 25. | garbage | ___ | 40. | carrot |
| ___ | 11. | hate | ___ | 26. | raindrop | ___ | 41. | snowflake |
| ___ | 12. | jewelry | ___ | 27. | homework | ___ | 42. | fidelity |
| ___ | 13. | information | ___ | 28. | happiness | ___ | 43. | loyalty |
| ___ | 14. | partner | ___ | 29. | faith | ___ | 44. | impatience |
| ___ | 15. | music | ___ | 30. | essay | ___ | 45. | peach |

Exercise 2

Place one of the words from the list before each noun below.
Use each word from the list only once.

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | coffee | 6. _____ | bread |
| 2. _____ | milk | 7. _____ | gas |
| 3. _____ | ice cream | 8. _____ | tuna |
| 4. _____ | cereal | 9. _____ | Coke |
| 5. _____ | yogurt | 10. _____ | candy |

Word List

- piece
- can
- loaf
- container
- bottle
- glass
- box
- gallon / liter
- cup
- bowl

Exercise 3

Find the error(s) in each sentence, then rewrite the correct sentences below.

1. The news on Channel 46 are always bad.

2. Rosa's hairs are long and blonds and her jewelry are very stylish.

3. The advisor gave me the wrong informations. Her advices were incorrect.

4. I bought two cheeses and three milks.

5. Henry drank two teas.

6. Statistics are a difficult class.

7. Hye Lim's favorite subject is a biology.

Exercise 3 cont.

8. The sands on Waikiki Beach are golden.

9. Jim gave his girlfriend two golds for her birthday.

10. The clothing in the new store at the mall are very expensive.

11. Hank wants to give you some advices, but the informations are not available.

12. Two mens and three womens are dancing in the hall.

13. Heera needs a paper. She heard a good news, and she wants to write two letter.

14. A love is stronger than a hate.

15. Martha says the beauty is not as important as the intelligence in a partner.

16. Coffee has many caffeines, so they keep me awake.

17. The Argentine peoples is very generous.

18. Harvey had a bad accident. He hurt his feets.

19. I cooked fishes for dinner.

20. How many furniture are there in your apartment?

Exercise 4

Place **a**, **an**, or **some** before the following nouns.

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. _____ mail | 11. _____ friend | 21. _____ problem |
| 2. _____ advice | 12. _____ sand | 22. _____ love |
| 3. _____ apple | 13. _____ piece | 23. _____ partner |
| 4. _____ traffic | 14. _____ news | 24. _____ music |
| 5. _____ hair | 15. _____ girl | 25. _____ classmate |
| 6. _____ information | 16. _____ email | 26. _____ women |
| 7. _____ job | 17. _____ message | 27. _____ book |
| 8. _____ work | 18. _____ hard drive | 28. _____ ant |
| 9. _____ assignment | 19. _____ bus | 29. _____ rice |
| 10. _____ homework | 20. _____ cheese | 30. _____ pen |

Exercise 5

Place **is** or **are** after the following nouns.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Six women _____ | 11. Faith _____ |
| 2. The mail _____ | 12. Five emails _____ |
| 3. Economics _____ | 13. Physics _____ |
| 4. Milk _____ | 14. Three bowls _____ |
| 5. Tigers _____ | 15. Sugar _____ |
| 6. The team _____ | 16. The army _____ |
| 7. <i>The Washington Post</i> _____ | 17. The movie <i>Frozen</i> _____ |
| 8. Coffee _____ | 18. Patience _____ |
| 9. The boys and girls _____ | 19. The Obamas _____ |
| 10. Salt _____ | 20. The grammar books _____ |

Exercise 6

QUIZ

Circle the correct answer.

- Let's listen to _____ music.
 - a
 - some
- Three dogs _____ in my backyard.
 - is
 - are
- Do you want an _____ for a snack?
 - apple
 - apples
- Can I have a _____ of water?
 - piece
 - glass
- Snow _____ on the ground.
 - is
 - are
- Would you like _____ cup of tea?
 - a
 - some
- I need _____ advice.
 - an
 - some
- He wants beans and _____ for dinner.
 - rice
 - rices
- Mathematics _____ my best subject.
 - is
 - are
- I bought a _____ of bread.
 - jar
 - loaf

Answer Key

Exercise 1

- | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. N | 10. C | 19. C | 28. N | 37. N |
| 2. C | 11. N | 20. N | 29. N | 38. C |
| 3. N | 12. N | 21. C | 30. C | 39. C |
| 4. C | 13. N | 22. N | 31. N | 40. C |
| 5. C | 14. C | 23. N | 32. N | 41. C |
| 6. C | 15. N | 24. N | 33. C | 42. N |
| 7. C | 16. N | 25. N | 34. C | 43. N |
| 8. N | 17. N | 26. C | 35. C | 44. N |
| 9. C | 18. C | 27. N | 36. N | 45. C |

Exercise 2

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. cup | 4. box | 7. gallon/ | 9. bottle |
| 2. glass | 5. container | liter | 10. piece |
| 3. bowl | 6. loaf | 8. can | |

Exercise 3

- The news on Channel 46 is always bad.
- Rosa's hair is long and blond and her jewelry is very stylish.
- The advisor gave me the wrong information.
Her advice was incorrect.
- I bought two pounds/kilograms of cheese
and three quarts/liters of milk.
- Henry drank two cups of tea.
- Statistics is a difficult class.
- Hye Lim's favorite subject is biology.
- The sand on Waikiki Beach is golden.
- Jim gave his girlfriend two gold rings for her birthday.
- The clothing in the new store at the mall is very expensive.

- Hank wants to give you some advice,
but the information is not available.
- Two men and three women are dancing in the hall.
- Heera needs some paper. She heard good
news, and she wants to write two letters.
- Love is stronger than hate. **[no articles]**
- Martha says beauty is not as important
as intelligence in a partner. **[no articles]**
- Coffee has much/a lot of caffeine, so it keeps me awake.
- The Argentine people are very generous.
- Harvey had a bad accident. He hurt his feet.
- I cooked fish for dinner.
- How much furniture is there in your apartment?

Exercise 4

- | | | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. some | 7. a | 13. a | 19. a | 25. a |
| 2. some | 8. some | 14. some | 20. some | 26. some |
| 3. an | 9. an | 15. a | 21. a | 27. a |
| 4. some | 10. some | 16. an | 22. some | 28. an |
| 5. some | 11. a | 17. a | 23. a | 29. some |
| 6. some | 12. some | 18. a | 24. some | 30. a |

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 5

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. are | 5. are | 9. are | 13. is | 17. is |
| 2. is | 6. is | 10. is | 14. are | 18. is |
| 3. is | 7. is | 11. is | 15. is | 19. are |
| 4. is | 8. is | 12. are | 16. is | 20. are |

Exercise 6

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. a | 5. a | 7. b | 9. a |
| 2. b | 4. b | 6. a | 8. a | 10. b |

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Color*, *Jewelry*, *Favorite*, and *Liters*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Colour*, *Jewellery*, *Favourite*, and *Litres*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

Note that it is possible to count some very common non-count nouns such as *coffee* and *Coke*. You might want to point this out in Exercise 3, #5. If *coffee* or *Coke* were given as the noun, both *Henry drank two cups of coffee/Coke* and *Henry drank two coffees/Cokes* would be possible.

For more practice with articles and quantifiers, see our [Grammar Practice Worksheet](#) lessons on *Articles - Beginner*, *Articles - Intermediate*, and *Quantifiers - Some & Any*.