

## 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 don't have enough **cups**.

## Uncountable

- ☐ I eat **rice** every day.
- ☐ I like **rice**.



**Rice** is an *uncountable* noun.

An uncountable noun has only one form (**rice**). There is no plural.

We cannot use numbers with uncountable nouns. We cannot say 'one rice', 'two rices' etc.

Examples of nouns usually uncountable:

- ☐ Kate was listening to **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 don't have 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.):

- ☐ Do you want **a banana**?  
(*not* 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.

We do not 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 rice

You 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 pictures**.
- ☐ 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

**69.1** Some of these sentences need **a/an**. Correct the sentences where necessary.

- 1 Joe goes everywhere by bike. He doesn't have a car. .....
- 2 Helen was listening to music when I arrived. OK .....
- 3 We went to very nice restaurant last weekend. ....
- 4 I brush my teeth with toothpaste. ....
- 5 I use toothbrush to brush my teeth. ....
- 6 Can you tell me if there's bank near here? ....
- 7 My brother works for insurance company. ....
- 8 I don't like violence. ....
- 9 When we were in Rome, we stayed in big hotel. ....
- 10 If you have problem, I'll try and help you. ....
- 11 I like your suggestion. It's interesting idea. ....
- 12 Can you smell paint? ....
- 13 I like volleyball. It's good game. ....
- 14 Lisa doesn't usually wear jewellery. ....
- 15 Jane was wearing beautiful necklace. ....
- 16 Does this city have airport? ....

**69.2** Complete the sentences using the following words. Use **a/an** where necessary.

<del>accident</del> ice	biscuit interview	blood key	coat moment	decision <del>music</del>	electricity question
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- 1 The road is closed. There's been an accident .....
- 2 Listen! Can you hear music ? .....
- 3 I couldn't get into the house. I didn't have ..... .
- 4 It's very warm today. Why are you wearing ..... ?
- 5 Would you like ..... in your drink?
- 6 Are you hungry? Have ..... !
- 7 Our lives would be very difficult without ..... .
- 8 Excuse me, can I ask you ..... ?
- 9 I'm not ready yet. Can you wait ..... , please?
- 10 The heart pumps ..... through the body.
- 11 We can't delay much longer. We have to make ..... soon.
- 12 I had ..... for a job yesterday. It went quite well.

**69.3** Complete the sentences using the following words:

air patience	day people	friend <del>picture</del>	joke queue	language space	meat umbrella
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Sometimes the word needs to be plural (-s), and sometimes you need to use **a/an**.

- 1 I had a camera with me, but I didn't take any pictures .....
- 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 good at telling ..... .
- 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 Paul always wants things quickly. He doesn't have much ..... .
- 10 I think it's going to rain. Do you have ..... I could borrow?
- 11 How many ..... can you speak?
- 12 Our flat is very small. We don't have much ..... .