

there is and there are

English A1

What this topic teaches

How do you say that something exists? Chinese uses : *zhuō shàng yǒu yì běn shū*. English does not let the table “have” the book. Instead it sends a little word called **there** to the front of the sentence: ***There is a book on the table.***

- **there is** + one thing; **there are** + many things.
- The thing comes first, the place comes last – the exact opposite of Chinese order.
- Memory hook: *there is/are* is English’s way of saying “something exists”, without accusing anyone of owning it.
- Note: this *there* is not the place word *there* (“over there”). It is a grammar worker with no meaning of its own. Same face, different job.

One or many: is or are

The verb matches the thing that follows it.

What exists	Form	Example
one thing	there is / there’s	There is a cat on the roof .
many things	there are	There are two cats on the roof.
uncountable stuff	there is	There is some water in the bottle.

- Speaking uses the short form **there’s** all the time: *There’s a problem.*
- △ There is no written short form “there’re”. Say it fast if you like, but write *there are*.
- With a list, the verb usually agrees with the first item: *There is a pen, two books and an eraser in my bag.* The first item wears the uniform for the whole list.

No and not any: the negative

- *There is not / there isn’t + any + noun*: *There isn’t any milk.* Or: *There is no milk.*
- Plural: *There aren’t any students here.* / *There are no students here.*
- *no* and *not any* do the same job. *No* is short and strong; *not any* is the everyday default .

Questions: the flip returns

The flip from topic 1 is back, unchanged.

Statement	Question	Short answer
There is a bank near here.	Is there a bank near here?	Yes, there is. / No, there isn't.
There are eggs in the fridge.	Are there eggs in the fridge?	Yes, there are. / No, there aren't.

- *Is there any milk?* – questions usually prefer *any* over *some*.
- $\triangle$ Short answers keep *there*: *Yes, there is*. Never just “*Yes, there.*” The worker does not work alone.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- $\triangle$ **The order flips.** *Zhuō shàng yǒu yì běn shū* puts the place first. English puts the thing first: *There is a book **on the table***. Place goes to the end. Every time you translate directly, the sentence lands backwards.
- $\triangle$ **Do not give the place “have”.** “*The table has a book*” feels like , but in English the table owns nothing. The book simply exists: *There is a book on the table*.
- $\triangle$ ***there is* is not *it is*.** *There is a party tonight* (a party exists) versus *It is a good party* (describing it). Existence uses *there*; description uses *it*.
- $\triangle$ Chinese asks English never says “*Have or not?*” The question is *Is there...?* / *Are there...?*

Say it aloud

Describe your classroom, your room, your city. Truth is optional; grammar is not.

- There are thirty students in my class, and one very tired teacher.
- There is a good noodle shop near my home. There aren't any bad ones. (Lie confidently.)
- Is there a gym near here? No, there isn't. The noodles won.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. ____ *a cat on the roof*. – **There is**. One cat, so *is*.
2. ____ *any milk*. (negative) – **There isn't**. Negative plus *any*.
3. Question: ____ *a bank near here?* – **Is there**. The same flip as topic 1.
4. Short answer: *Are there eggs?* – **Yes, there are**. Keep *there*; never *Yes, there*.
5. – **There is a book on the table**. Thing first, place last: the order flips.