

English A2 · Countable and uncountable nouns

Elementary English for Chinese speakers; classroom examples, not official exam items.

Fingers and soup

Countable things can be counted on your fingers; uncountable things are soup — you cannot count soup, you can only have more of it.

Two families, two toolkits

Tool	Countable	Uncountable
one	a book	× no a
a large amount	many books	much water
a small amount	a few books	a little water
some / any	some books	some water
how question	How many books?	How much water?

Use the evidence

some and any serve both families.

Your turn: which family

Your turn

How ____ money do you have?

- A. many
- B. much
- C. few
- D. a few

The famous uncountables

Word	The rule	Example
homework	never homeworks	I have a lot of homework.
money	never moneys	How much money?
information / advice / news	no -s; news stays singular	some good advice; the news is sad
water / milk / bread / rice	drinks and staples	some bread, a little milk
music / furniture	mass nouns	some music, a lot of furniture

Your turn: the news

Your turn

The news ____ good today.

- ☐ A. are
- ☐ B. is
- ☐ C. were
- ☐ D. be

Measuring the soup

- 1 **The problem** You cannot count soup directly.
- 2 **The container** a bottle of water, a cup of tea, a piece of bread.
- 3 **The plural** two bottles of water, three pieces of advice.

Decision

The container takes the plural; the water stays soup.

Your turn: the bread

Your turn

Which is correct?

- ☐ A. a bread
- ☐ B. some breads
- ☐ C. a piece of bread
- ☐ D. a rice

The -s temptation

Soups that look countable

homeworks · moneys · informations · advices — all impossible.

much homework · a piece of information · some advice.

Say it aloud

Countable inventory: three books,
two pens, a few friends, many dreams.

Uncountable inventory: much homework,
a little money, some music, a lot of rice.

One piece of advice: never count your homework aloud.

It hears you and grows.

Check yourself

- How much money do you have? — money is soup.
- some good advice — advice never grows an -s.
- a few friends — with the a, enough; without it, sad.
- two bottles of water — the container takes the plural.