

Countable and uncountable nouns

English Grammar · A2

Countable vs Uncountable

Two kinds of noun

Countable	Uncountable
can be counted	no plural
<i>a book · two books</i>	<i>water · music</i>

Two kinds of noun: reference card grid

English nouns are divided into two categories:

- **Countable nouns:** can be counted, have singular and plural forms. a book → two books.
- **Uncountable nouns:** cannot be directly counted, have no plural form. water, music, money, information.

I bought three apples.

I bought three apples. (Countable)

I need some water.

I need some water. (Uncountable, no ~waters~)

Note

- Uncountable nouns take a **singular verb**: *The news is good.* (The news is good.)
- To count uncountable nouns, use measure words: a **glass of** water, a **piece of** information.

some and any



some and **any** mean “some”, used before plurals or uncountable nouns:

- **some:** used in **affirmative sentences** (also used in polite requests / invitations).
- **any:** used in **negative sentences** and **interrogative sentences**.

There are some eggs in the fridge.

There are some eggs in the fridge.

There isn't any milk.

There is no milk left.

Do you have any questions?

Do you have any questions?

Note: When offering drinks to others, *some* is commonly used to sound polite: *Would you like some tea?*

much / many / a lot of

Used to express “a lot”:

- **many + countable plural:** many books.
- **much + uncountable:** much water (mostly used in negative sentences / questions).
- **a lot of + both types** (most common in positive sentences).

There are many people here.

There are many people here.

We don't have much time.

We don't have much time left.

She has a lot of friends.

She has a lot of friends.

Note: In positive sentences, *much* is rarely used; instead use **a lot of**: ~~I have much money~~ → I have **a lot of** money.

Common Errors

- × ~~informations / advices / homeworks / furnitures~~ → ✓ information / advice / homework / furniture — These words are **uncountable** in English (although Chinese can say “several pieces of advice” or “pieces of furniture”). They never take a plural form.
- × ~~a bread / a paper~~ → ✓ **a piece of** bread / **a piece of** paper — Uncountable nouns require measure words to be counted.
- × ~~How much apples do you want?~~ → ✓ How **many** apples...? — Use *many* for countable plurals and *much* only for uncountable nouns.
- × ~~There aren't some eggs.~~ → ✓ There aren't **any** eggs — Replace *some* with *any* in negative sentences.