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	• words for general people, places, or things	• book • window • cafeteria • teller • teacher	• streets • cars • remote control • police officer
2	proper nouns	• names of specific people, places, or things • when *the* is used with a proper noun, *the* is usually in the lower case (not capitalized)	• Veronica • Chile • Seoul • Disneyland • the Bradens	• the New York Times • Boardwalk Empire • Jennifer Lopez • Prof. Lenore Sinclair
3	collective nouns	• singular words that refer to groups of people or animals • either common or proper	• team • family • committee • congress	• herd (of cows) • the Rodriguez family • the New York Yankees
4	abstract nouns	• words for ideas or concepts (we know they exist, but we can't use our sense of *touch*, *hearing*, *sight*, *taste*, or *smell* to find them)	• love • hate • honesty • faith • freedom • patience	• joy • responsibility • fidelity • dislike • loyalty

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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	Plural
• a cat	• cats
• an orange	• two oranges
• one soldier	• 15 soldiers
• the recipe	• 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
• advice	• biology	• coffee	• clothing
• information	• physics	• rice	• food
• beauty	• criminal justice	• flour	• furniture
• intelligence	• psychology	• salt	• garbage
• faith	• Spanish	• sugar	• money
• joy	• economics	• pepper	• homework
• freedom	• statistics	• tea	• music
• love	• English	• water	• jewelry
• happiness	• health	• sand	• equipment
• luck	• physical education	• rain	• makeup
• hate	• writing	• snow	• traffic
• news	• mathematics	• hair	• mail
• honesty			
• vocabulary			**Note:** *email* is a count noun.
• work			

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C. Non-Count Nouns cont.

Food items	Minerals	Liquids and gases
• bread	• copper	• air
• pasta	• tin	• pollution
• butter	• gold	• fog
• soup	• iron	• wind
• cheese	• silver	• beer
• chocolate	• steel	• soup
• fruit		• milk
• fish		• water
• meat		• oil
• beef		• 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
2. _____ milk
3. _____ ice cream
4. _____ cereal
5. _____ yogurt

6. _____ bread
7. _____ gas
8. _____ tuna
9. _____ Coke
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
2. _____ advice
3. _____ apple
4. _____ traffic
5. _____ hair
6. _____ information
7. _____ job
8. _____ work
9. _____ assignment
10. _____ homework

11. _____ friend
12. _____ sand
13. _____ piece
14. _____ news
15. _____ girl
16. _____ email
17. _____ message
18. _____ hard drive
19. _____ bus
20. _____ cheese

21. _____ problem
22. _____ love
23. _____ partner
24. _____ music
25. _____ classmate
26. _____ women
27. _____ book
28. _____ ant
29. _____ rice
30. _____ pen

Exercise 5

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

1. Six women _____
2. The mail _____
3. Economics _____
4. Milk _____
5. Tigers _____
6. The team _____
7. *The Washington Post* _____
8. Coffee _____
9. The boys and girls _____
10. Salt _____

11. Faith _____
12. Five emails _____
13. Physics _____
14. Three bowls _____
15. Sugar _____
16. The army _____
17. The movie *Frozen* _____
18. Patience _____
19. The Obamas _____
20. The grammar books _____

Exercise 6

QUIZ

Circle the correct answer.

1. Let's listen to _____ music.

   a) a
   b) some

2. Three dogs _____ in my backyard.

   a) is
   b) are

3. Do you want an _____ for a snack?

   a) apple
   b) apples

4. Can I have a _____ of water?

   a) piece
   b) glass

5. Snow _____ on the ground.

   a) is
   b) are

6. Would you like _____ cup of tea?

   a) a
   b) some

7. I need _____ advice.

   a) an
   b) some

8. He wants beans and _____ for dinner.

   a) rice
   b) rices

9. Mathematics _____ my best subject.

   a) is
   b) are

10. I bought a _____ of bread.

    a) jar
    b) 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

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

11. Hank wants to give you some advice,
    but the information is not available.
12. Two men and three women are dancing in the hall.
13. Heera needs some paper. She heard good
    news, and she wants to write two letters.
14. Love is stronger than hate. **[no articles]**
15. Martha says beauty is not as important
    as intelligence in a partner. **[no articles]**
16. Coffee has much/a lot of caffeine, so it keeps me awake.
17. The Argentine people are very generous.
18. Harvey had a bad accident. He hurt his feet.
19. I cooked fish for dinner.
20. 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

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.*