

# Singular, Plural, and Noncount Nouns

## Using Singular Nouns

English nouns can be divided into two categories: *count nouns* and *noncount nouns*.

A count noun is *singular* when there is *one* of the person, place, or thing it names.

When a noun is singular, use *a* or *an* before it. Use *a* if it begins with a *consonant* sound; use *an* if it begins with a *vowel* sound.

### exercise

### 2-1

Write *a* or *an* before each of the following singular nouns.

- \_\_\_\_\_ brother
- \_\_\_\_\_ aunt
- \_\_\_\_\_ artist
- \_\_\_\_\_ employer
- \_\_\_\_\_ janitor
- \_\_\_\_\_ professor
- \_\_\_\_\_ patient
- \_\_\_\_\_ engineer
- \_\_\_\_\_ reporter
- \_\_\_\_\_ stewardess
- \_\_\_\_\_ sister
- \_\_\_\_\_ uncle
- \_\_\_\_\_ dentist
- \_\_\_\_\_ driver
- \_\_\_\_\_ actor
- \_\_\_\_\_ adviser

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 17. _____ accountant | 29. _____ bus stop |
| 18. _____ technician | 30. _____ basement |
| 19. _____ architect  | 31. _____ elbow    |
| 20. _____ actress    | 32. _____ arm      |
| 21. _____ cheek      | 33. _____ ankle    |
| 22. _____ chest      | 34. _____ nose     |
| 23. _____ leg        | 35. _____ eye      |
| 24. _____ ear        | 36. _____ library  |
| 25. _____ mouth      | 37. _____ house    |
| 26. _____ area       | 38. _____ ocean    |
| 27. _____ apartment  | 39. _____ airport  |
| 28. _____ river      | 40. _____ attic    |

Use *a* or *an* before a singular noun to answer the question "What . . . ?"

What do you do?

What is it?

What do you want?

I'm **a** secretary. I'm **an** actor.

It's **a** banana. It's **an** apple.

I want **a** house. I want **an** apartment.

Use the number *one* before a singular noun to answer the question "How many . . . ?"

How many cars do you have?

How many English classes are there?

We have **one** car.

There is **one** class.

Use "There is . . ." before a singular noun to indicate that it exists.

**There is** an accountant in my family.

**There is** a library on the corner.

**There is** only one bus stop on this street.

## exercise

2-2

Look at page 13 of this book and answer the following questions. Be careful in your choice of *a*, *an*, or *one* before each singular noun.

1. What do you have in your hands?

---

2. What is there at the very end of this book?

---

3. In the word *Contents*, what is there between the first *n* and the *e*?

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4. How many *e*'s are there in the word *Contents*?

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### Words for Groups of People

Some singular nouns name groups of people who have the same interest. These are called *collective* nouns. Use a collective noun with a singular verb form. Observe the following examples:

band	company
choir	family
chorus	government
class	orchestra
committee	team

## exercise

2-3

Fill in each blank with a word from the previous list. Be sure to include *a* or *an* in each blank before the noun.

1. A group of people who take a course together is \_\_\_\_\_.

2. A group of people who play musical instruments together can be

\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

3. A group of people who form a business is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. People who are related by blood are \_\_\_\_\_.

5. A group of people who play together to win a game or sport is \_\_\_\_\_.

6. A group of people who control public policy in a country is \_\_\_\_\_.

7. A group of people who make plans for a larger group is called \_\_\_\_\_.

8. A group of people who sing together is \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

### Using Plural Nouns

A count noun is *plural* when there is *more than one* of the person, place, or thing it names. To make a singular noun plural:

- Add *-s*:

one tree	three trees
one word	four words
one sister	two sisters

- Add *-es* to a few words that end in *-o*:

one echo	two echoes
one mosquito	three mosquitoes
one tomato	four tomatoes
one hero	four heroes
one potato	two potatoes
one tornado	two tornadoes

- Add *-es* to nouns that end in *-ch*, *-sh*, *-ss*, and *-x*:

one beach	two beaches
one dish	four dishes
one dress	two dresses
one fax	three faxes

- Add *-ies* to nouns that end in a consonant followed by *-y*, after dropping the *-y*:

one city	two cities
one country	four countries
one family	two families
one puppy	six puppies

- Add *-ves* to nouns that end in *-f* or *-fe*, after dropping the *-f* or *-fe*:

one calf	two calves
one half	two halves
one leaf	three leaves
one knife	five knives

- Use an irregular form for certain nouns:

one child	two children
one man	four men
one person	three people
one tooth	four teeth
one mouse	three mice
one woman	three women
one foot	two feet

- Use the singular form for the plural for certain nouns:

one deer	three deer
one sheep	four sheep
one fish	two fish

## exercise

2-4

Write the plural form of each of the following nouns.

1. brother \_\_\_\_\_
2. daughter \_\_\_\_\_
3. wife \_\_\_\_\_
4. baby \_\_\_\_\_
5. child \_\_\_\_\_
6. man \_\_\_\_\_
7. woman \_\_\_\_\_
8. teenager \_\_\_\_\_
9. artist \_\_\_\_\_
10. customer \_\_\_\_\_
11. student \_\_\_\_\_
12. actress \_\_\_\_\_
13. boss \_\_\_\_\_
14. nurse \_\_\_\_\_
15. eye \_\_\_\_\_
16. ear \_\_\_\_\_
17. toe \_\_\_\_\_
18. church \_\_\_\_\_
19. city \_\_\_\_\_
20. library \_\_\_\_\_
21. bus stop \_\_\_\_\_
22. post office \_\_\_\_\_
23. window \_\_\_\_\_
24. glass \_\_\_\_\_

25. knife \_\_\_\_\_
26. fork \_\_\_\_\_
27. stove \_\_\_\_\_
28. facecloth \_\_\_\_\_

## exercise

2-5

Write the plural form of each of the following collective nouns.

1. band \_\_\_\_\_
2. choir \_\_\_\_\_
3. chorus \_\_\_\_\_
4. class \_\_\_\_\_
5. committee \_\_\_\_\_
6. family \_\_\_\_\_
7. government \_\_\_\_\_
8. orchestra \_\_\_\_\_
9. team \_\_\_\_\_

Use *are there* and a plural noun in a question to ask if any exist and how many:

- Are there any** cars in your driveway?  
 How many cars **are there**?  
 How many houses **are there** on this street?  
 How many pages **are there** in this book?

Use *there are* followed by any number from *two* on up before a plural noun to tell how many of them exist:

- There are two** cars in the driveway.  
**There are ten** houses on this street.  
**There are 208** pages in this book.

Use *there are* before the word *no* when it indicates *zero*. *No* is followed by a plural noun:

- There are no** cars in the driveway.  
**There are no** houses on this street.

*Not any* can be used instead of *no* to indicate *zero*:

There are **not any** cars in the driveway.  
There are **not any** houses on this street.

There **aren't any** cars in the driveway.  
There **aren't any** houses on this street.

### Words for Clothes and Accessories

Review the following examples:

For Men and Women	Usually for Women	Usually for Men
belt	blouse	necktie/bow tie
cap	bracelet	tuxedo
chain	dress	
coat	handbag/purse/pocketbook	
earring	necklace	
hat	nightgown	
jacket	skirt	
raincoat		
ring		
robe		
scarf		
shirt		
suit		
sweater		
sweatshirt		
T-shirt		
umbrella		
wallet		
watch		

#### exercise

2-6

Select twelve items from the preceding list, and write how many of each item there are in your closets and drawers. Use *There are* to begin each sentence.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_

### Pairs

Some clothing items are usually in two parts, which are sometimes separate, such as two *gloves*, and sometimes connected, such as *pants*. The nouns are plural. One set of two parts is a *pair*. A *pair of shoes*, for example, is two shoes, one for the left foot and one for the right. A *pair of pants* is one item, with two legs.

Review the following examples of *pairs*:

#### For Men and Women

#### Usually for Women

earrings  
glasses  
    sunglasses  
gloves  
pajamas  
pants  
    jeans  
    shorts  
    sweatpants  
shoes  
    boots  
    sandals  
    slippers  
socks

flats  
high heels  
stockings  
tights

### exercise

2-7

*How many pairs do you have in your closets and drawers?*

I have one pair of \_\_\_\_\_, one pair of \_\_\_\_\_, and one pair of \_\_\_\_\_.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ pairs of \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ pairs of \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_ pairs of \_\_\_\_\_.

## Quantities

To tell an approximate number of plural items there are, use:

<i>some</i>	=	more than one
<i>a few</i>	=	three or four
<i>a lot of/ lots of/ many</i>	=	a large number of/ plenty of/ enough
<i>not many</i>	=	a small number of
<i>too many</i>	=	more than is good or necessary

I have **some** tickets for the ball game.  
 There are **a few** seats in the front row.  
**A lot of** people are going to the game.  
 There are **not many** seats.  
 There are **too many** people here.

## exercise

2-8

Look at all of the lists of nouns for people, places, and things to answer the following questions.

1. What do you have *some* of? Begin each answer with *I have . . .*

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2. What are there *a lot of* outside? Begin each answer with *There are . . .*

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3. What are there *not many* of in the place where you live? Begin each answer with *There are . . .*

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4. What do you see *a few* of right now? Begin each answer with *I see . . .*

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5. What do you have *too many* of? Begin each answer with *I have . . .*

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### Words for Food

Review the following words that name things to eat or drink. These nouns can be either singular or plural.

apple	nut
avocado	orange
banana	pea
bean	pear
carrot	potato
cherry	potato chip
doughnut	salad
drink	sandwich
egg	snack
grape	soda
hamburger	steak
hot dog	tomato
meal	vegetable

## exercise

2-9

Write one of the following words or groups of words in each blank, depending on whether the nouns are singular or plural.

a an one some a lot of a few no any two

1. He eats \_\_\_\_\_ egg and \_\_\_\_\_ doughnut for breakfast.
2. I like to have \_\_\_\_\_ apple or \_\_\_\_\_ orange in the afternoon.
3. Would you like \_\_\_\_\_ peas and \_\_\_\_\_ carrots?
4. She wants \_\_\_\_\_ sandwich and \_\_\_\_\_ potato chips.
5. I want \_\_\_\_\_ banana.
6. We would like \_\_\_\_\_ hot dogs, please.
7. There aren't \_\_\_\_\_ hamburgers.
8. She is going to the store to buy \_\_\_\_\_ tomatoes.
9. She's going to buy \_\_\_\_\_ steaks for dinner.
10. I didn't order \_\_\_\_\_ salad; I ordered \_\_\_\_\_ vegetables instead.

### Using Noncount Nouns

Many words for food are *noncount* nouns. Some examples are the words in the following list:

Liquids	Dry Items	Meat	Dairy Products	Vegetables	Other
beer	bread	bacon	butter	broccoli	cake
coffee	cereal	beef	cheese	cauliflower	candy
cream	flour	chicken	ice cream	corn	fruit
gravy	rice	fish	yogurt	eggplant	jam
juice	sugar	meat		lettuce	jelly
milk	toast	pork		spinach	pepper
sauce				squash	pie
soup					popcorn
tea					salt
water					
wine					

Many personal care items are also named by noncount nouns. Review the words in the following list:

aftershave lotion	lotion
bath gel	perfume
conditioner	shampoo
cream	shaving cream
fingernail polish	soap
fingernail polish remover	toothpaste

Use *is there any* before a noncount noun to ask if it exists:

- Is there any rice in the cupboard?
- Is there any fruit in the refrigerator?
- Is there any soap in the bathroom?

Use *how much* followed by a noncount noun plus *is there* to ask the amount of it that exists:

- How much ice cream is there?
- How much cereal is there?
- How much water is there?
- How much shampoo is there?

To tell the approximate amount of a noncount noun, use:

<i>some</i>	=	more than nothing
<i>a lot of</i>	=	a large amount of
<i>a little</i>	=	a small amount of
<i>not much</i>	=	a very small amount of
<i>no/not any</i>	=	nothing

- There is **some** ice cream in the freezer.
- There is **a lot of** fruit in the bowl.
- There is **a little** cereal in the box.
- There is **not much** shampoo.
- There is **no** water./There isn't any water.

**exercise****2-10**

Use words from the noncount noun food list to answer the following questions.

1. What is there a lot of in your refrigerator?

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2. Is there any candy in the cupboard?

---

3. How much bread is there in the kitchen?

---

4. Is there any popcorn in the cupboard?

---

5. Is there too much of anything?

---

## exercise

2-11

Use words from the noncount noun personal care items list to answer the following questions.

1. Is there any shampoo in your bathroom?

---

2. How much toothpaste is there?

---

3. What else is there?

---

To tell the exact amount of a noncount noun, use the singular or plural of the container of the item, the weight of the item, or the number of *pieces* or *servings* of it there are:

a can of soup  
 a cup of coffee  
 a glass of milk  
 a bowl of cereal  
 one spoonful of sugar  
 one serving of spinach  
 a piece of meat  
 a tube of toothpaste

three cans of soup  
 two cups of coffee  
 four glasses of milk  
 a few bowls of cereal  
 two spoonfuls of sugar  
 three servings of spinach  
 two pieces of meat  
 two tubes of toothpaste

Types of Containers	Weights and Measures	Serving Sizes
bag	cup	bite
bar	drop	piece
bottle	gallon	sip
bowl	ounce	slice
box	pint	
case	pound	
cup	quart	
glass	spoonful	
jar	tablespoon	
package	teaspoon	
plate		
tube		

## exercise

2-12

Look at your answers to Exercise 2-10. Change the approximate amounts of each item to exact amounts and write the complete sentences here.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**exercise****2-13**

*Look at your answers to Exercise 2-11. Change the approximate amounts of each item to exact amounts and write the complete sentences here.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**exercise****2-14**

*Circle all of the words or sets of words that could be used in each blank.*

1. There is \_\_\_\_\_ bread on the table.  
 a little    a    a lot of    some    three slices of    no    a slice of
2. There are \_\_\_\_\_ bread on the table.  
 a little    a few    some    three slices of    an    no
3. We need \_\_\_\_\_ ice cream.  
 a little    some    three bowls of    many    a gallon of    two quarts of
4. She drank \_\_\_\_\_ milk.  
 a glass of    three glasses of    a few    some    a little
5. They're going to buy \_\_\_\_\_ rice.  
 some    a little    a few    two bags of    a    an    one
6. I would like to have \_\_\_\_\_ lettuce on my sandwich.  
 a piece of    two pieces of    a little    a    two    some
7. He ate \_\_\_\_\_ cake.  
 some    a piece of    piece of    two pieces of    three    a lot of

8. There is \_\_\_\_\_ pie in the refrigerator.

some      a piece of      piece of      two pieces of      no      three

9. There are \_\_\_\_\_ cups of coffee here.

a      two      one      a few      a little      some      no      any

10. I drink \_\_\_\_\_ juice every morning.

a      two      a glass of      two glasses of      some      a lot of      too many

### Words for Groups of Individual Items

Other *noncount* nouns include words that represent groups of individual items. The individual items can be counted, but the word that represents the entire group cannot.

Furniture	Mail	Jewelry	Money	Information	Trash
bed	advertisement	bracelet	dime	brochure	boxes
chair	bill	earrings	dollar bill	notice	packaging
desk	letter	necklace	five	pamphlet	used items
dresser	postcard	pin	nickel	report	
nightstand	penny				
sofa	quarter				
table	ten				
	twenty				
For a Desk	For Cooking	Hardware	Medicine	Makeup	Entertainment
paper	pan	hammer	capsule	blush	game
pen	pot	nail	drop	eyebrow pencil	movie
pencil	spatula	pliers	pill	foundation	party
scissors	spoon	screw	tablet	lipstick	radio
tape		screwdriver		mascara	show
		wrench		powder	television

There is *some* furniture.  
 You have *a little* mail.  
 She has *a lot of* jewelry.

He has *a little* money.  
 We got *some* information.  
 There is *too much* trash.

There are three chairs.  
 You have two letters and a postcard.  
 She has five necklaces, four bracelets, and  
 twenty pairs of earrings.  
 He has a ten, a five, and three quarters.  
 We got a brochure and two reports.  
 There are boxes, old clothes, broken toys,  
 worn-out tires, and broken dishes.

## exercise

2-15

Answer each question.

1. How much furniture do you have?

---

2. What mail do you usually receive?

---

3. What jewelry do you like to wear?

---

4. How much money do you have in your pocket?

---

5. What do you throw in the trash every day?

---

There are many things that cannot be counted. Like all noncount nouns, words for these things do not have plural forms. Review the words in the following list:

advice	help	poverty
air	homework	rain
beauty	housework	sickness
cold	intelligence	snow
courage	kindness	strength
darkness	light	water
health	news	wealth
heat	pollution	work

**There is some** housework to do.

**There is a lot of** news.

**There is a little** snow in the mountains.

**There is not much** heat in the house.

**There is too much** rain.

Do *not* use *a*, *an*, *one*, *many*, or any number with a noncount noun.

## exercise

2-16

Circle all of the words that can be used in each blank space.

1. We have \_\_\_\_\_ help.

many      a little      four      an

2. There is \_\_\_\_\_ heat.

no      too many      some      a little

3. They need \_\_\_\_\_ advice.  
 some      an      not many      a lot of
4. She has \_\_\_\_\_ work.  
 many      some      a little      a      an
5. There is \_\_\_\_\_ poverty in the city.  
 a      too much      not many      a lot of

**exercise****2-17**

Answer the following questions. Use *no*, *not much*, *some*, *a little*, *a lot of*, or *too much* before each noncount noun.

1. Do you have news about your friends in your country? Begin your answer with *I have . . .*

---

2. Is there work available in this city? Begin your answer with *There is . . .*

---

3. How much rain is there here in the summer? Begin your answer with *There is . . .*

---

4. Do you need advice? Begin your answer with *I need . . .*

---

5. Is there pollution in your area? Begin your answer with *There is . . .*

---

### **Using Articles with Singular, Plural, and Noncount Nouns**

The indefinite articles *a* and *an* are used before singular nouns that refer to any one of that person, place, or thing:

- A clock is **an** instrument that marks time.  
 A watch is **a** clock that you wear on your wrist.

The previous sentences do not name a specific clock or watch; they refer to clocks and watches in general.

The articles *a* and *an* can refer to a specific singular noun to tell or ask someone about it for the first time:

I have **a** clock that is 150 years old.  
Her boyfriend gave her **a** watch for her birthday.

There are no indefinite articles for plural and noncount nouns. To refer to people, places, or things in general, *no* word ( $\emptyset$ ) is placed before the plural or noncount noun:

$\emptyset$  Clocks are instruments that mark time.  
 $\emptyset$  Mail includes anything that can be delivered by the post office.

No word ( $\emptyset$ ) can refer to a plural or noncount noun to tell or ask someone about it for the first time:

Her boyfriend brings her  $\emptyset$  flowers every week.  
You got  $\emptyset$  mail this morning.

**exercise**
**2-18**

Fill in each blank with one of the following.

**a**                      **an**                       **$\emptyset$**

- I am going to buy \_\_\_\_\_ orange.
- They sell \_\_\_\_\_ oranges at the market on the corner.
- Do you have \_\_\_\_\_ fruit?
- Yes, we have \_\_\_\_\_ oranges and \_\_\_\_\_ apples.
- Where do they sell \_\_\_\_\_ furniture in this city?
- I'm looking for \_\_\_\_\_ table, \_\_\_\_\_ chairs, and \_\_\_\_\_ desk.
- We need \_\_\_\_\_ information.
- Can you give me \_\_\_\_\_ advice?
- Do you have \_\_\_\_\_ kitchen equipment?
- I want to buy \_\_\_\_\_ pot and \_\_\_\_\_ frying pan.

The definite article *the* is used before a singular noun, a plural noun, or a noncount noun to refer to a specific person, place, or thing.

*The* is used when the speaker and the listener both know which particular item is being referred to:

She showed me **the** watch *her boyfriend gave her* for her birthday.  
**The** flowers *he sent her* were beautiful.  
**The** furniture *I bought* was cheap.

## exercise

2-19

Fill in each blank with one of the following:

a

an

Ø

the

1. I bought \_\_\_\_\_ radio yesterday.
2. Where is \_\_\_\_\_ radio (you bought)?
3. We have \_\_\_\_\_ kitchen equipment on sale.
4. Where is \_\_\_\_\_ kitchen equipment (that you have on sale)?
5. I love \_\_\_\_\_ flowers.
6. Are these \_\_\_\_\_ flowers your friend sent you?
7. Where is \_\_\_\_\_ medicine the doctor gave you?
8. Are these \_\_\_\_\_ pills you are taking?
9. He is looking for \_\_\_\_\_ information.
10. He didn't like \_\_\_\_\_ information he got from the company.

## exercise

2-20

Write two sentences that tell about one thing you have. Use a or an in the first sentence to introduce it. Use the in the second sentence to tell more about it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## exercise

2-21

Write two sentences that tell about something you have more than one of. Use Ø in the first sentence to introduce the items. Use the in the second sentence to tell more about them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE

2-22

Write two sentences that tell about a noncount item you have. Use  $\emptyset$  in the first sentence to introduce it. Use *the* in the second sentence to tell more about it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

*The* is used when there is only one possible reference:

- I left my keys in **the** car. (the car I drive)  
 Please put the bags in **the** kitchen. (the only kitchen in the house)  
 Please feed **the** dog. (the dog we own)

## EXERCISE

2-23

Fill in each blank with one of the following:

a                      an                      the                       $\emptyset$

1. We bought \_\_\_\_\_ car last night.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ cars are expensive.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ car we bought is a convertible.
4. Do you like \_\_\_\_\_ convertibles?
5. Do you like \_\_\_\_\_ convertible we bought?

### Using Demonstrative Pronouns with Singular, Plural, and Noncount Nouns

There are four *demonstrative pronouns*: *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. *This* and *these* refer to nouns that are close enough to touch, things that are *here*.

Use *this* before a singular or noncount noun; use *these* before a plural noun:

- This** watch is the one I like.  
**These** watches are very expensive.  
**This** jewelry is very expensive.

*That* and *those* refer to nouns that are not close enough to touch, things that are *there*:

- Do you like **that** dress in the store window?  
**Those** dresses in front are very pretty.  
**That** information about the prices is not correct.

## exercise

2-24

Fill in each blank with this, that, these, or those:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ book in my hands is very interesting.
2. What are \_\_\_\_\_ things he is carrying?
3. We're going to see \_\_\_\_\_ new movie at the Odeon.
4. Come here and look at \_\_\_\_\_ pictures with me.
5. Who is \_\_\_\_\_ girl over there?
6. Who are \_\_\_\_\_ girls over there?
7. Hi, I'm Sally and \_\_\_\_\_ are my friends, Amy and Courtney.
8. I'm wearing \_\_\_\_\_ sweater because I'm cold.