

Countable and uncountable nouns

CEFR A2 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

The two noun groups, the words that only work with each, the measures that make uncountables countable, and the nouns with two meanings.

The rule

Countable nouns

- Countable nouns have a singular and a plural form: a cup, two cups; a child, three children.
- They take a or an in the singular: a table, an apple, an hour.
- They take many, few, a few and how many: "How many chairs do we need?"
- A singular countable noun cannot stand alone: "I bought table" is wrong; use "a table" or "the table".

Uncountable nouns

- Uncountable nouns have one form: water, rice, money, music, work, traffic.
- They take no a or an and no plural -s: "some water", never "a water" or "waters".
- They take much, little, a little and how much: "How much sugar do you want?"
- They agree with a singular verb: "The news is good", "Money is not everything".

The everyday uncountable list

- Food and drink: bread, rice, cheese, meat, butter, milk, coffee, tea.
- Ideas and information: advice, information, news, knowledge, research, progress, homework.
- Materials and things in mass: furniture, luggage, baggage, equipment, money, cash, traffic, weather.
- Subjects and activities: music, art, work, health, help, time (in general).

Measures make uncountables countable

- Use a piece of, a slice of, a bottle of, a cup of, a loaf of to count uncountable things.
- A piece of advice, two pieces of information, a slice of bread, a bottle of water.
- The measure word becomes plural, not the uncountable noun: "three pieces of furniture".
- Some nouns are plural only: clothes, trousers, scissors, glasses, police. They take a plural verb.

Nouns with two meanings

- Paper is uncountable as a material, countable as a newspaper: "a paper".
- Glass is the material; a glass is the drinking object; glasses are spectacles.
- Time is uncountable in general, countable as an occasion: "We had a good time."
- Work is uncountable; a work means a piece of art or writing.
- Coffee and tea are uncountable as drinks but countable as orders: "Two coffees, please."

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. She gave me a useful piece of ____.

2. I need some ____ about the course.

3. How ____ chairs do we need for the meeting?

4. How ____ sugar should I add?

5. We bought two new ____ for the living room.

6. The news ____ very good today.

7. My trousers ____ too tight.

8. I bought ____ paper to read on the train.

9. Can I have two ____, please?

10. There is not ____ bread left.

11. There are not ____ eggs in the fridge.

12. She needs a new pair of ____.

13. We had ___ time at the beach yesterday.

14. The teacher gave us too ___ homework.

15. There were too ___ people on the bus.

16. Could I have a ___ of water, please?

17. Could you give me ___ help with this box?

18. The report needs two more pieces of ___.

19. The ___ outside was terrible.

20. She has made a lot of ___ in English this year.

Answer key

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1. **advice** — Advice is uncountable; a piece of makes it countable.
2. **information** — Information is uncountable and never takes -s.
3. **many** — Chairs are countable, so the question uses how many.
4. **much** — Sugar is uncountable, so the question uses how much.
5. **pieces of furniture** — Furniture is uncountable, so the measure word becomes plural.
6. **is** — News is uncountable and takes a singular verb.
7. **are** — Trousers are plural only and take a plural verb.
8. **a** — A paper means one newspaper, so it is countable in this meaning.
9. **coffees** — Coffee becomes countable when it means one cup per order.
10. **much** — Bread is uncountable, so it takes much.
11. **many** — Eggs are countable, so they take many.
12. **glasses** — A pair of glasses counts the plural-only noun for spectacles.
13. **a good** — A good time means one pleasant occasion, so time is countable here.
14. **much** — Homework is uncountable, so it takes much.
15. **many** — People is countable, so it takes many.
16. **glass** — A glass of water is the usual measure word for a drink.
17. **some** — Help is uncountable, so it takes some, not a or an.
18. **equipment** — Equipment is uncountable; the piece carries the plural.
19. **weather** — Weather is uncountable and has no plural form.
20. **progress** — Progress is uncountable and takes no plural.