


Rapid Review of English Grammar

(Countable and Uncountable Nouns)



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Countable
&
Uncountable
nouns

Uncountable Nouns

DEFINITION

Uncountable nouns are for the things that we cannot count with numbers. They may be the names for abstract ideas or qualities or for physical objects that are too small or too amorphous to be counted.

(liquids, powders, gases, etc.).

Notes

- ❖ Uncountable nouns have no plural forms.
- ❖ They are not preceded by a/an.

Categories of Uncountables

ABSTRACT	MATERIAL	GENERIC ²	NON-PLURALS WITH FINAL S
advice help information knowledge	meat rice bread cake coffee ice cream	fruit apparatus equipment machinery furniture	economics mathematics physics civics
trouble work	water oil	mail luggage jewelry clothing money	mumps ³ measles ³
enjoyment fun recreation relaxation	grass hair		news tennis (and other games)

Number Agreement

- Verbs used with countables are always singular forms. Pronouns used to substitute for uncountable nouns are singular forms.
- Examples:
 - Advice **is** cheap but experience **is** dear.
 - Opportunity **knocks** but once.
 - Virtue **is** **its** own reward.
 - My furniture **is** worn out.
I need to replace **it**.

Double Duty Words

Many words are either countable or uncountable depending upon how they are used. Very often the meaning of a countable form is quite different from the meaning of uncountable. Here are a few examples:

UNCOUNTABLE	WORD	COUNTABLE
commerce in general visitors metal money, coins the transparent material	business company change glass	a store or factory a business enterprise an alteration a drinking receptacle (pl.) spectacles
the metal	iron	a household appliance for smoothing clothing
the material	paper	a newspaper a written composition (pl.) official identification
space the beverage exertion, labor	room tea work	a partitioned area a late afternoon party an artistic composition: graphic, literary, musical
the quality of being young	youth	a young person

Countable Nouns

DEFINITION

Countable nouns are for things we can count using numbers. They have a singular and a plural form. The singular form can use the determiner "a" or "an".

Regular plural forms:

a. Spelling

RULES	EXAMPLES
1. When the simple form ends in <i>s, z, ch, sh, or x</i> , add <i>es</i> .	box wish boxes wishes
2. When the simple form ends in <i>o</i> preceded by a consonant, add <i>es</i> .	tomato mosquito tomatoes mosquitoes
3. When the simple form ends in <i>f</i> or <i>fe</i> , change the <i>f</i> or <i>fe</i> to <i>v</i> and add <i>es</i> .	leaf wife self leaves wives selves
4. When the simple form ends in <i>y</i> preceded by a consonant, change the <i>y</i> to <i>i</i> and add <i>es</i> .	party library parties libraries
5. In all other cases add <i>s</i> to the simple form.	friend studio day friends studios days

b. Exceptions-add *s* only

1. When <i>ch</i> is pronounced like <i>k</i> .	epochs, stomachs
2. When the <i>-o</i> word has to do with music—and some other cases.	pianos, sopranos
3. These three <i>-f</i> words only. Some others have two plural forms.	chiefs, roofs, handkerchiefs

Irregular Plural Forms

8 Irregular plural forms are few. The ones you are likely to need are the following:

foot	feet	mouse	mice	woman	women	ox	oxen
tooth	teeth	man	men	child	children		

Foreign plural forms

9 Foreign plural forms

a. A few nouns of Greek or Latin origin retain their original plurals.

analysis	analyses	crisis	crises	phenomenon	phenomena
basis	bases	datum	data	stimulus	stimuli

b. Other common nouns from Latin have gained an English plural without losing the original. Both forms are used. The Latin is the more formal.

formula	formulae	formulas
medium	media	mediums
memorandum	memoranda	memorandums

10 No special form for plural

- a. *Deer, fish, and sheep* do not have special forms. We say *two deer, three fish, four sheep*.
- b. *Series* and *means* look and sound like plural forms, but they are also used as singulars: *a series of operations; a means of transportation*.

11 Plural-only words

- a. Names of some things which are composed of two similar parts are always plural. Some of the most frequently used ones are:

scissors	trousers	glasses
tweezers	pants	spectacles
tongs	pajamas	binoculars

- b. Two very ordinary words which have no singular forms are *clothes* and *people*.



Worry is a total waste of time. It doesn't change anything. All it does is steal your joy and keeps you very busy doing nothing.