

GRAMMAR REVIEW

NOUNS

There are four classes of nouns in English:

- a) proper nouns (*Duccio, Verona, the West*) which always begin with a capital letter;
- b) collective nouns referring to a group of objects (*library*);
- c) abstract nouns (*harmony, faith*);
- d) common nouns (*sphere*).

Exercise 2

Put capital letters where necessary.

- 1) a dutch painter
- 2) the fortune theatre
- 3) next monday
- 4) at easter
- 5) in july
- 6) the national gallery
- 7) an egg
- 8) the house of commons

PLURALS

The plural of the majority of nouns is formed by adding *-s* to the singular form: *text* → *texts*.

Nouns ending in *-s*, *-ch*, *-o*, *-sh*, *-x*, *-zz* add *-es*:

church → *churches* *glass* → *glasses* *box* → *boxes*.

Nouns which end in *-y* preceded by a consonant change *-y* to *-ies*: *story* → *stories* *country* → *countries*; whereas many nouns ending in *-y* preceded by a vowel follow the normal rule: *key* → *keys*, *play* → *plays*.

Nouns ending in *-f* or *-fe* usually (but not always) change to *-ves*:

life → *lives* *knife* → *knives* *wolf* → *wolves*, but *roof* → *roofs*.

Some nouns have irregular plurals: *person* → *people* *child* → *children*.

Nouns of foreign origin may retain their foreign plurals: *medium* → *media* or may take the English plural: *predella* → *predellas*.

Some nouns have no singular form: *clothes*, and some, although plural, are used in the singular: *advice*.

Information is one of the several nouns that are countable in Italian but uncountable in English. They have no plural form and the verb that follows them is always singular: *His information is always accurate*.

The indefinite article *a/an* is never used:

I need some information. *Have they given you any information?*

If it is necessary to specify the singular, expressions like *a piece of*, *an item of*, *a bit of* may be used: *a bit of useful information*, *a piece of advice*, *a sheet of paper*, *a bottle of wine*, *an item of news*.

Some other uncountable nouns in English are: *behaviour*, *business*, *furniture*, *luggage/baggage*, *money*, *music*, *news*, *progress*, *travel*, *research*, *work*.

Some nouns may change meaning when they appear in the plural: *compass* (*bussola*) and *compasses* (*compasso*).

A few nouns remain in the singular form, whether singular or plural:

fish → *fish* *sheep* → *sheep*.

Exercise 3

With the help of your dictionary, give the plural of the following:

basis

man

criterion

box

mouse

half

concerto

datum

wish

poem

child

essay

sheep

city

camera

GENDER

In English gender is not determined by the noun itself, as opposed to Italian and other European languages. However, there are masculine, feminine and neuter forms to indicate sex: *-ess*: *actor* → *actress*, *-ette*: *usher* → *usherette*, *-man/woman*: *policeman* → *policewoman*. There is a tendency now to avoid using gender-based nouns such as the latter, so that now *-person* has replaced them: *barman/women* → *barperson*. Most nouns have completely different forms for the sexes: *Lord* → *Lady*.

Exercise 5

Say if the following nouns are masculine, feminine, or neuter:

architect

nun

doctor

duchess

bride

waitress

artist

emperor

hero

girl

widower

goddess

master

queen

traveller

COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

Nouns are divided into two general classes:

countable nouns: *window, image, value, house;*

uncountable nouns: *perspective, environment, literacy.*

Some nouns belong to both classes. Countable nouns often take on an abstract meaning when used as uncountable nouns:

Work on the chapel is continuing.

That painting is a work of art.

Space is infinite.

An open space.

Some uncountable nouns can be used as countable nouns in more formal English:

People don't understand his work.

Peoples of the world unite!

I would like some water.

By the waters of Babylon. (Biblical)

Exercise 6

With the help of a dictionary write a sentence for each of the following pairs of words, which change meaning if countable or uncountable.

1) *light / a light*

2) *tea / a tea*

3) *hair / a hair*

4) *iron / an iron*

5) *wood / a wood*

6) *glass / a glass*

7) *rubber / a rubber*