

Types of noun

Nouns belong to two broad families: *countable nouns* and *uncountable nouns*.

Countable nouns include:

- individual things, people and places:
a diary, a memo, a photo, a receptionist, a factory, a corridor
- units of measurement:
a metre, a mile, a kilo, a pound, a litre, a gallon

Countable nouns:

- are used with *a / an*
- can be used in the plural (*diaries, memos, etc.*)
- follow words such as *many, these, those, several, few, a few, a number of*

Uncountable nouns include:

- substances:
gas, glass, gold, iron, oil, plastic, water, etc.
- many abstract ideas:
access, freedom, health, humour, profitability, progress, relevance, safety, etc.
- verbal nouns:
brainstorming, job-sharing, restructuring, shopping, timing

Uncountable nouns:

- do not take *the* when used in a general sense (NOT *the travel broadens the mind)
- take the singular form of the verb
- have words like *much, little, a little, some, a great deal of* before them

Some of the more common uncountable nouns are:

accommodation advertising advice baggage brainstorming cash
clothing damage employment equipment furniture hardware information
insurance legislation merchandise money news progress research
software traffic training transport travel weather work

It is possible to refer to one example of an uncountable noun by using a countable expression before it or by using another word or expression:

accommodation: a place to live
advice: a piece of advice
information: a piece of information
insurance: an insurance policy
money: a coin / a banknote / a sum
progress: a step forward
training: a training course
work: a job / task

Plural nouns

We add *-s* to form the plural of most nouns. If the noun ends in *-s*, *-x*, *-ch* or *-sh*, we add *-es*:
classes boxes churches crashes

We also add *-es* to the following:

hero → heroes potato → potatoes tomato → tomatoes

If the final consonant of a noun is followed by *-y*, it is changed into *-ies*:

delivery → deliveries party → parties worry → worries

There are nouns which only occur in the plural. For example:

Earnings per share have increased.

Their **headquarters** are in Boston.

The **goods** will be sent by special delivery.

Don't leave **valuables** in your car.

I'm getting fat and my **trousers** are too tight.

All her **clothes** were lost at the airport.

We've opened new **premises** in Warsaw.

Refreshments are available in the lobby.

He lives on the **outskirts** of the town.

Many **thanks** for your invitation.

What **means** of transport do you prefer?

Works Entrance

Singular nouns ending in *-s*

Some nouns end in *-s* but are not plural:

The news **was** good.

Politics **has** never been one of my favourite subjects.

Economics **is** not an exact science.

Rabies **is** a dangerous disease.

Irregular plurals

Some words do not take an *-s* but have other forms, other endings or stay the same:

aircraft → aircraft criterion → criteria foot → feet formula → formulae (or formulas)

half → halves life → lives matrix → matrices person → people phenomenon → phenomena

tooth → teeth woman → women

Groups and organisations

Singular nouns such as *bank* or *committee* can be seen either as a number of people (plural) or as a collective unit (singular). As a result, the following verb or pronoun may be either singular or plural.

The bank **has** sent me my new credit card.

The committee **have** shelved the project.

Other words in this category include:

club firm government management media police public staff team union