

Non-Count Nouns

Overview

- **Example:** I bought a chair. Mark bought three chairs.
→ Chair is a count noun; chairs are items that can be counted.
- **Example:** We bought some furniture.
→ Furniture is a non-count noun. In grammar, furniture cannot be counted.
INCORRECT: We bought some *furnitures*.
INCORRECT: We bought *a furniture*.

Count Nouns:

- May be preceded by **a / an** in the singular, e.g. a chair or one chair.
- Take a final **-s / -es** in the plural, e.g. Ø* chairs; two chairs; some chairs; a lot of chairs; many chairs.

Non-count Nouns:

- Are not immediately preceded by **a / an**.
- Have no plural form, so do not take a final **-s / -es**, e.g. Ø* furniture; some furniture; a lot of furniture; much furniture.

* Ø = *no article*

Non-Count Nouns

To express a particular quantity, some non-count nouns may be preceded by unit expressions, e.g. a spoonful of sugar, a glass of water, a cup of coffee, a bowl of soup, a piece of jewelry, a piece of paper

Many non-count nouns refer to a “whole” that is made up of different parts:

- **Example:** I bought 4 chairs, 2 tables, and a desk. In other words, I bought some furniture.
→ Furniture represents a whole group of things made up of similar but separate items.
- **Example:** I put some sugar in my coffee.
→ Sugar and coffee represent whole masses made up of similar particles or elements.

Many non-count nouns are abstractions:

- **Example:** I wish you luck.
→ Luck is an abstract concept, an abstract “whole.” It has no physical form; you can’t touch it. You can’t count it.

A phenomenon of nature, e.g. sunshine, is frequently used as a non-count noun:

- **Example:** Sunshine is warm and cheerful.

Many nouns are used as non-count or count nouns, but the meaning is different:

NONCOUNT

Ann has brown hair.

COUNT

Rodrigo has a hair on his jacket.

I opened the curtains to let in some light.

Turn off the light before you go to

Some Common Non-Count Nouns

Whole groups made up of similar items: baggage, clothing, equipment, food, fruit, furniture, garbage, hardware, jewelry, junk, luggage, machinery, mail, makeup, money / cash / change, postage, scenery, traffic, etc.

Fluids: water, coffee, tea, milk, oil, soup, gasoline, blood, etc.

Solids: ice, bread, butter, cheese, meat, gold, glass, paper, wood, cotton, etc.

Gases: steam, air, oxygen, nitrogen, smoke, smog, pollution, etc.

Particles: rice, chalk, corn, dirt, flour, grass, salt, sand, sugar, wheat, etc.

Abstractions:

- beauty, confidence, education, enjoyment, fun, intelligence, knowledge, patience, sleep, truth, wealth, etc.
- advice, information, research, news, proof, evidence, etc.

Languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish, etc.

Fields of study: chemistry, engineering, history, literature, etc.

Recreation: soccer, hockey, tennis, chess, poker, etc.

Activities: driving, studying, swimming, travelling, etc.

Natural phenomenon: weather, heat, humidity, rain, lightening, snow, wind, fire.