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Countable and Uncountable Nouns

In English grammar, words that refer to people, places, or things are called nouns. They can be classified in many ways. One way to classify nouns is according to whether they can be counted or not.

- **Countable nouns** are things we can count. A countable noun can be singular (banana) or plural (bananas).

Examples: I eat a banana every day.

I like bananas.

We do not have enough cups.

- **Uncountable nouns** are things we cannot count. An uncountable noun has only one form (a singular form). These words are thought of as wholes rather than as parts. They usually refer to abstractions (such as confidence or advice) or collectives (such as equipment or luggage).

Examples: I eat rice every day.

I like rice.

We do not have enough water.

Using Countable & Uncountable Nouns

When using countable or uncountable nouns, pay attention to articles and adjectives! Some articles and adjectives can be used with both countable and uncountable nouns. However, others can be used with only countable or only uncountable nouns.

❖ How much/ How many

- We use how much and how many to ask about quantities.
 - ✓ How much + uncountable nouns
 - ✓ How many + countable nouns

❖ Some/Any

- We use some with affirmative sentences with both countable and uncountable nouns.

Examples: There are some potatoes.

There is some water.

- We use any with negative sentences, with both countable and uncountable nouns.

Examples: We haven't got any bananas.

We have not got any bread.

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- We use some in questions when we ask for things and offer things.

Example: Can I have some water?

- We use any with both countable and uncountable nouns in questions.

Examples: Are there any tomatoes?
Is there any meat?

❖ **A/An**

- Use **a** before singular countable nouns that begin with consonant. **Ex:** She is a photographer.
- Use **an** before singular countable nouns that begin with a vowel sound. **Ex:** She is an artist.
- Do not put **a / an** before plural nouns. Instead, use plural countable nouns alone. **Ex:** I like bananas.

❖ **A lot of/ Much/ Many/ little/ a little/ few/ a few**

- We use a lot of in affirmative and negative sentences, and in questions, with both countable and uncountable nouns. **Examples:** I eat a lot of fish.
I drink a lot of milk.
- We use much in negative sentences and questions, with uncountable nouns. We never use much in affirmative sentences. **Examples:** I don't eat much salt.
Do you eat much salt?

N.B. A lot of can also be used in these cases: I don't eat a lot of salt.

- We use many in negative sentences and questions with countable nouns. **Example:** I don't eat many cakes.
- We can use few, a few and many with countable nouns. **Examples:** I have got few friends.
I've got a few dollars
- We use little, a little and much with uncountable nouns. **Examples:** I've got little time.
I have got a little money.
I haven't got much rice

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Used with Countable & Uncountable Nouns		
the	countable	the monkeys, the schools, the teachers, the boats, the bananas
	uncountable	the cheese, the machinery, the luggage, the grass, the knowledge
some	countable	some tables, some stores, some grapes, some cities, some nurses
	uncountable	some time, some news, some bread, some salt, some mail
any	countable	any forks, any socks, any bathrooms, any waiters, any beliefs
	uncountable	any advice, any soap, any transportation, any gold, any homework
no	countable	no magazines, no chocolates, no pilots, no rings, no markers
	uncountable	no trouble, no grass, no scenery, no money, no furniture
a lot of	countable	a lot of animals, a lot of coins, a lot of immigrants, a lot of babies
	uncountable	a lot of help, a lot of aggravation, a lot of happiness, a lot of fun
lots of	countable	lots of computers, lots of buses, lots of parties, lots of colleges
	uncountable	lots of cake, lots of ice cream, lots of energy, lots of laughter
enough	countable	enough plates, enough onions, enough restaurants, enough worries
	uncountable	enough courage, enough wisdom, enough spaghetti, enough time
plenty of	countable	plenty of houses, plenty of concerts, plenty of guitars, plenty of
	uncountable	plenty of oil, plenty of sugar, plenty of cheese, plenty of space

List of some Uncountable Nouns

General	Food	Subjects/Fields	Abstract
homework	food	mathematics	advice
equipment	flour	economics	help
luggage	meat	physics	fun
clothing	rice	ethics	recreation
furniture	cake	civics	enjoyment
machinery	bread	art	information
gold	ice cream	architecture	knowledge
silver	cheese	music	news
cotton	toast	photography	patience
glass	pasta	grammar	happiness
jewelery	spaghetti	chemistry	progress
perfume	butter	history	confidence
soap	oil	commerce	courage
paper	honey	engineering	education
wood	soup	politics	intelligence
petrol	fish	sociology	space
gasoline	fruit	psychology	energy
baggage	salt	vocabulary	laughter
hair	tea	archaeology	peace
traffic	coffee	poetry	pride

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Activity: Choose the answer! Read the sentence. Circle the correct answer.

1. I've got _____ water in my bag. **any / some / a**
2. There is _____ rice in the cupboard. **any / a / some**
3. There aren't _____ bananas on the table. **any / some / a**
4. Is there _____ orange juice? **a / any / some**
5. My parents gave me _____ new toys for my birthday. **some / a / any**
6. Are there _____ grapes in the fridge? **a / some / any**
7. I've got _____ book to read for school. **some / a / any**
8. We haven't got _____ time! **a / some / any**