

[C,U]

Some nouns have both countable and uncountable meanings.

cheese coffee paper friendship

- ▶ [U] *Have some cheese!*
- ▶ [C] *They sell a variety of cheeses.*
(= types of cheese)
- ▶ [U] *I don't drink much coffee.*
- ▶ [C] *She ordered two coffees.*
(= cups of coffee)
- ▶ [U] *I haven't got any more paper.*
- ▶ [C] *Can you buy me a paper?*
(= a newspaper)
- ▶ [U] *Friendship is more important than wealth.*
- ▶ [C] *None of these were lasting friendships.* (= relationships)

[sing]

Some nouns are only singular. They cannot be used in the plural.

the countryside the doctor's a laugh

- ▶ *We love walking in the countryside.*
- ▶ *I'm going to the doctor's today.*
- ▶ *The party was a good laugh.*

[pl]

Other words are only plural.

jeans sunglasses scissors

You cannot say *a sunglasses*. To talk about individual items, you say a pair:

- ▶ *a pair of sunglasses*
- ▶ *two pairs of sunglasses*

Words like **headphones, clothes, and goods** can only be used in the plural:

- ▶ *I need to buy some new clothes.*

Nouns which describe groups of people, such as **the poor** are plural:

- ▶ *The poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer.*

Articles

The definite article

You use the definite article, **the**, when you expect the person who is listening to know which person or thing you are talking about:

- ▶ *Thank you for the flowers*
(= the ones that you brought me).
- ▶ *The teacher said my essay was the best*
(= our teacher).

You use **the** with the names of rivers and groups of islands:

- ▶ *Which is longer, the Rhine or the Danube?*
- ▶ *Where are the Seychelles?*
- ▶ *Menorca is one of the Balearic Islands.*

The indefinite article

You use the indefinite article, **a** (an before a vowel sound), when the other person does not know which person or thing you are talking about or when you are not referring to a particular thing or person:

- ▶ *He's got a new bike.*
(I haven't mentioned it before.)
- ▶ *Can I borrow a pen?*
(Any pen will be okay.)

You also use **a/an** to talk about a type or class of people or things, such as when you describe a person's job:

- ▶ *She's an accountant.*

You use **a/an** in prices, speeds, etc:

- ▶ *\$100 a day*
- ▶ *50 cents a pack*
- ▶ *70 kilometres an hour*
- ▶ *three times a week*

No article

You do not use an article when you are talking in general:

- ▶ *I love flowers (all flowers).*
- ▶ *Honey is sweet (all honey).*
- ▶ *Lawyers are well paid (lawyers in general).*

You *do not* use **the** with most names of countries, counties, states, streets, or lakes:

- ▶ *I'm going to Turkey.*
- ▶ *a house in Walton Street*
- ▶ *She's from Yorkshire.*
- ▶ *Lake Louise*
- ▶ *They live in Iowa.*

or with a person's title when the name is mentioned:

- ▶ *President Kennedy*
BUT *the President of the United States*

Possessive forms

You can add 's to a word or a name to show possession. It is most often used with words for people, countries and animals:

- ▶ *Ann's job*
- ▶ *the children's clothes*
- ▶ *the manager's secretary*
- ▶ *the dog's basket*

- ▶ *my brother's computer*
- ▶ *Spain's beaches*

When the word already ends in a plural **s**, you add an apostrophe after it:

- ▶ *the boys' rooms*
- ▶ *the Smiths' house*

The possessive adjectives are **my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their**. The possessive pronouns are **mine, yours, his, hers, ours, yours, theirs**. The possessive question word is **whose**.

You use possessive pronouns when you do not need to repeat a noun:

My book is here. Where's yours?

Quantity

Much is used with **uncountable nouns**, usually in negative sentences and questions:

- ▶ *I haven't got much money left.*
- ▶ *Did you watch much television?*

Much is very formal in affirmative sentences:

- ▶ *There will be much discussion before a decision is made.*

Many is used with **countable nouns**, usually in negative sentences and questions:

- ▶ *There aren't many tourists here in December.*
- ▶ *Are there many opportunities for young people?*

In affirmative sentences, it is more formal than a lot of:

- ▶ *Many people prefer to stay at home.*

A lot of or (*informal*) **lots of** is used with countable and uncountable nouns:

- ▶ *A lot of tourists visit the castle.*
- ▶ *He's been here lots of times.*
- ▶ *I've spent a lot of money.*
- ▶ *You need lots of patience to make model aircraft.*

A little is used with **uncountable nouns**:

- ▶ *Add a little salt.*

A few is used with **countable nouns**:

- ▶ *I've got a few letters to write.*

Note that in these sentences, the meaning is positive. **Few** and **little** without a **have** a negative meaning.