

Articles with countable and uncountable nouns

Countable nouns are the names of separate people or objects which we can count. Uncountable nouns are the names of materials, liquids and other things which we do not see as separate objects.

We can use the indefinite article (a/an) with singular countable nouns. A plural countable noun cannot be used with indefinite articles. Countable nouns (both singular and plural) can also be used with numbers.

A cat

Two cats

A boy

Two boys

We cannot use the indefinite article or numbers with uncountable nouns.

Water (NOT a water) (NOT two waters)

Weather (NOT a weather) (NOT two weathers)

A singular countable noun usually has an article or other determiner with it. We say, *the cat*, *my cat* or *this cat*, but not just *cat*. Plural and uncountable nouns can be used with or without an article or other determiner.

Exceptions

Many nouns which are normally uncountable are treated as countable in some cases.

Have you got a good shampoo? (Although shampoo is an uncountable noun, it is treated as countable to express the meaning of 'a type of'.)

Three coffees, please. (= three cups of coffees)

Some nouns that are countable in other languages are uncountable in English. Examples are: *information*, *advice*, *news*, *scenery*, *accommodation* etc.