



English Grammar

A Student's Guide to Using 'Nouns' in Academic Writing



Nouns



When writing in English it is important to know whether a noun is countable or uncountable

- Some nouns are only countable
- Some nouns are only uncountable
- Some nouns are countable and uncountable



Countable Nouns



Countable nouns are the most common type of nouns in English

Definition

A countable noun is a word that refers to a person or thing and has a singular and plural form. Countable nouns refer to things that can be counted. These are shown in the dictionary by the letter [C] or the abbreviation [count]

(Adapted from Seely, 2009)



Countable Nouns



Countable nouns usually form their plural by adding 's' to the singular form

Singular	Plural = 's'
effect	effects
issue	issues
problem	problems



Countable Nouns



Countable nouns ending in 'y' usually form their plural by deleting 'y' and adding 'ies'

Singular = 'y'	Plural = 'ies'
country	countries
study	studies
theory	theories



Countable Nouns



Some countable nouns come from Greek or Latin and have irregular plural forms

Singular = 'is'	Plural = 'es'
analysis	analyses
basis	bases
crisis	crises



Countable Nouns



Irregular countable nouns from Greek or Latin

Singular = 'is'	Plural = 'es'
emphasis hypothesis thesis	emphases hypotheses theses



Countable Nouns



Irregular countable nouns from Greek

Sing = 'on'	Plural = 'a'
criterion phenomenon	criteria phenomena



Countable Nouns



Some countable nouns come from Greek or Latin but follow the English rules

Singular	Plural = 's'
dogma	dogmas
formula	*formulas

*** Note: The Latin form 'formulae' is used by scientists**



Countable Nouns



Some countable nouns from Latin and Greek have two plural forms with different meanings

Singular	Plural = 'xes' or 'ces'
appendix	appendixes (medical term) appendices (medical term)
appendix	appendices (additions in book)



Countable Nouns



Some countable nouns from Latin and Greek have two plural forms with different meanings

Singular	Plural = 'xes' or 'ces'
index	indexes (in a book)
index	indices (mathematical term)



Uncountable Nouns



Uncountable nouns (also *non-count* or *mass* nouns) are the second largest group of nouns

Definition

An uncountable noun is a word that refers to a body, or mass, of something. Uncountable nouns refer to things that cannot be counted. These are shown in the dictionary with the letter [U], the abbreviation [uncount.], or the word [mass]

(Adapted from Seely, 2009)



Uncountable Nouns



Uncountable nouns in academic English

Examples

advice; damage; finance; influence; information;
infrastructure; knowledge; research;



Uncountable Nouns



Uncountable nouns are always singular and are NOT used with 'a' or 'an'

Example

- x** ~~A~~ recent research has shown
- ✓ Recent research has shown
- x** ~~An~~ information can be found in the library.
- ✓ Information can be found in the library.



C & U Nouns



There is a third group of nouns that can be both countable and uncountable

Explanation

Nouns in this group change with meaning and use. Where countability depends on use, the noun is shown in the dictionary as [C,U]. Where countability depends on meaning, one meaning may be shown as countable [C] and another meaning shown as uncountable [U]



C & U nouns



Countable/Uncountable nouns [C,U] depending on use:

Technology [C, U]

When “technology” is used to refer to the 'body' or 'mass' of technology, it is **uncountable**

Example: In the 21st Century, technology **has** revolutionised almost every aspect of daily life.



C & U nouns



Countable/Uncountable nouns [C,U] depending on use:

Technology [C,U]

When the words 'technology' refers to a number of technological developments, it is **countable**

Example: Modern **technologies**, such as the laser and the computer, **have** led to scientific breakthroughs.



C & U nouns



**Uncountable noun in one meaning [U];
countable noun in another meaning [C]:**

Development [U]

When “development” means “growth” or “economic activity” it is **uncountable** (LDOCE)

Example: Economic development **has** been rapid in BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) nations.



C & U nouns



**Uncountable noun in one meaning [U];
countable noun in another meaning [C]:**

Development [C]

When “development” means “a new event” or “an improvement” it is **countable** (LDOCE)

Example: Significant **developments** in genetic technology **have** improved modern medicine.



C & U nouns



Countable noun in one meaning [C];

Countable/Uncountable in another [C, U];

Impact [C]

When 'impact' means “the effect or influence that an event, situation etc. has on someone or something” (LDOCE), it is **countable**

Example: The **impact** of peer pressure on teenagers **tends** to be reflected in certain types of behaviour.



C & U nouns



Some nouns are countable [C] in one meaning but and both [C, U] in another meaning

Impact [C, U]

When 'impact' means “the force or one object hitting another” (LDOCE), it can be **countable** or **uncountable** depending on how it is used



C & U nouns



Some nouns are countable [C] in one meaning but and both [C, U] in another meaning

Impact [C,U]

When 'impact' is used to mean a number of different forces, it is **countable**

Example: The impacts of momenta **are** not easy to control.



C & U nouns



Some nouns are countable [C] in one meaning but and both [C, U] in another meaning

Impact [U]

When 'impact' means the collective force or one object hitting another it is **uncountable**

Example: The impact of the vehicles hitting the wall **was** sufficient to damage the building.



References



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Thank you for watching!



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