

Unit 70

Countable nouns with a/an and some

Nouns can be *countable* or *uncountable*. For *uncountable* nouns see **Unit 69**.

a Countable nouns are, for example:

dog umbrella job suggestion girl

Countable nouns are things we can count. We can make them plural:

two dogs six jobs some girls many suggestions

b Before singular countable nouns you can use *a/an*:

- That's *a* good suggestion.
- Do you need *an* umbrella?

You cannot use singular countable nouns alone (without *a/the/my* etc.):

- I'm looking for *a* job. (*not* 'I'm looking for job')
- Be careful of *the* dog. (*not* 'Be careful of dog')
- I've got *a* headache.
- Would you like *a* cigarette?

For *a/an* and *the* see **Unit 71**.

c We often use *a/an* + noun when we say what something/someone is, or what something/someone is like:

- A dog is *an* animal.
- This is *a* really beautiful house.
- What is *a* lovely dress!
- Tom is *a* very nice person.
- Jack has got *a* big nose.

Remember to use *a/an* for jobs:

- Tom's father is *a* doctor. (*not* 'Tom's father is doctor')
- I wouldn't like to be *an* English teacher.

In sentences like these, we use plural countable nouns alone (*not* with *some*):

- Tom's parents are *very nice people*. (*not* 'some very nice people')
- Ann has got *blue eyes*.
- What *awful shoes*!
- Dogs are *animals*.
- Are most of your friends *students*?

d We also use *some* with plural countable nouns. *Some* = *a number of* / *a few of* (but we don't know or say exactly how many):

- I've seen *some* good *films* recently. (*not* 'I've seen good films')
- *Some* *friends* of mine are coming to stay at the week-end.

Do not use *some* when you are talking about things in general:

- I love *bananas*. (*not* 'some bananas')

Sometimes you can use *some* or leave it out:

- There are (*some*) eggs in the fridge if you're hungry.

For *some* and *any* see **Unit 84**.