

Unit 69

Uncountable nouns (gold, music, advice etc.)

Nouns can be *countable* or *uncountable*. For *countable* nouns see **Unit 70**.

a *Uncountable* nouns are, for example:

gold music blood excitement

Uncountable nouns are things we cannot count. They have no plural. You cannot say 'musics', 'bloods' or 'excitements'.

b Before uncountable nouns you can say *the/some/any/much/this/his* etc.:

the music some gold much excitement his blood

But you cannot use *a/an* before an uncountable noun. So you cannot say 'a music', 'an excitement' or 'a blood'.

You can also use uncountable nouns alone, with no article (see **Unit 74**):

- This ring is made of gold. - Blood is red.

c Many nouns can be used as countable or as uncountable nouns. Usually there is a difference in meaning. For example:

paper	I bought a paper. (= a newspaper - <i>countable</i>)
	I bought some paper. (= material for writing on - <i>uncountable</i>)
hair	There's a hair in my soup! (= one single hair - <i>countable</i>)
	She has beautiful hair. (= hair on her head - <i>uncountable</i>)
experience	We had many interesting experiences during our holiday. (= things that happened to us - <i>countable</i>)
	You need experience for this job. (= knowledge of something because you have done it before - <i>uncountable</i>)

d Some nouns are usually uncountable in English but often countable in other languages. Here are the most important of these:

acomodation	behaviour	furniture	news	scenery	trouble
advice	bread	information	permission	traffic	weather
baggage	chaos	luggage	progress	travel	work

These nouns are *uncountable*, so (i) you cannot use *a/an* before them; and (ii) they cannot be plural:

- I'm looking for acomodation. (*not* 'an accomodation')
- I'm going to buy some bread. (*or* 'a loaf of bread'; *but not* 'a bread')
(ii) they cannot be plural:

- I'm looking for acomodation. (*not* 'an accomodation')
- I'm going to buy some bread. (*or* 'a loaf of bread'; *but not* 'a bread')
- Tom gave me some good advice. (*not* 'some good advices')
- Where are you going to put all your furniture? (*not* 'furnitures')

Remember that *news* is not plural:

- The news is very depressing today. (*not* 'The news are ...')

Do not use *travel* to mean *journey/trip*:

- We had a good journey. (*not* 'a good travel')

Note these pairs of countable (C) and uncountable (UNC) nouns:

- I'm looking for a job. (C) *but* I'm looking for work. (UNC)
- What a lovely view! (C) *but* What lovely scenery! (UNC)

