

A noun can be classified as being either a count noun, which includes singular and plural nouns, or as a non-count noun. Non-count nouns are alternately referred to as collective nouns.

Navigating noun variants can be challenging at times. One reason for this is that some nouns have both count and non-count forms. Another reason is that a particular noun may function as a non-count noun in English but as a count noun in other languages.

### Count Nouns

Count nouns typically have both a singular and plural form. You can usually place a number directly before a count noun.

**A singular noun** refers to a single item

One *textbook*, a journal *article*, a *criterion*, the *chapel*  
Monday's *class*, your Writing Studio *appointment*, their basketball *team*

**A plural noun** refers to multiple items

The journal *articles*, four *criteria*, recent research *studies*  
What do you know about repairing the *drives* of *laptops*?

### Non-Count or Collective Nouns

A non-count noun has only one form to represent a collective entity. Advice, economics, news, traffic, homework, and reading serve as non-count nouns in standard U.S. English dialect.

What kind of *evidence* will support the model's validity? [*not*: evidences]  
Our *knowledge* about the Higgs Boson particle has expanded. [*not*: our knowledges]  
"A little *information* is a dangerous thing," proposed Alexander Pope.  
*Rice* serves as a food staple in many countries, but perhaps not in Ireland.

### Ways to adjust non-count nouns to indicate plural meaning

What are two *pieces of advice* about writing concisely? [*not*: the advices, two advices]  
He wants to incorporate more *types/pieces/kinds of evidence* in the essay. [*not*: more evidences]  
These *pieces of information* are related. or: additional facts [*not*: additional informations]  
Were many *slices* or *loaves* of moldy bread used in penicillin studies? [*not*: two/many breads]

## Dual Forms of Nouns

### Some nouns have separate count and non-count forms in everyday use

In the examples below, while the meanings of the two forms are related, the focus shifts.  
The non-count form focuses on a more general case and the count form on a more specific one.

Do you have much job *experience* in this area of management? (general)  
What were a few of your many *experiences* during your summer internship? (specific)  
The conference provided *tea* in the afternoon. (general) Which *teas* do you prefer? (specific)

### Some nouns have a non-count form for everyday use and a count form for use within a profession or discipline. The meanings in these paired examples are similar

We have *money* in the bank, but our lawyer talks of *monies*. (general, specific)  
What kind of *literature* do you most enjoy reading? (general)  
I took a course on Spanish and Portuguese *literatures* last semester. (specific)  
Belize designates *English* as its official national language. (general)  
Did you enjoy your linguistics course on World *Englishes*? (specific varieties of English)

### Some nouns have a count and a non-count form whose meanings differ

Supreme Court *justices* (judges) rule on matters of *justice* (fairness).  
The *air* near the North Carolina coast has a salty edge to it.  
People sometimes put on *airs* when they want to fit in or impress others.  
See <https://www.idioms.online/put-on-airs/>

## Special Cases of Plurality

### Some count nouns exist solely in the plural, but cannot accept numbers as adjectives. These count nouns typically refer to tools or clothing.

Some surgical *scissors* are stored down the hall in the supply closet. [*not*: 4 scissors]  
The researchers examined how touching buttons on some *jeans* caused skin problems for patients with nickel allergies. [*not*: 2 jeans]

### Modifiers allow us to count such nouns

How many *pairs of surgical scissors* can be sterilized at once?  
The researchers tested 90 *pairs of blue jeans* for the nickel content of their buttons.

## For more information

<https://guidetogrammar.org/grammar/noncount.htm>

<http://guidetogrammar.org/grammar/determiners/determiners.htm#quantifiers>