



Uncountable Nouns

This PDF contains notes and an exercise on the usage of uncountable nouns in a business context. It is free for teachers to print, use and distribute in this form.

For the online version of the activity, visit:

<http://www.roadtogrammar.com/businessenglish/ucn>

What is an uncountable noun?

An uncountable noun is simply a noun which cannot be counted. We treat it as a single entity. An example is flour; we treat any mass of flour as a single substance. Another example is honesty.

There are some nouns that may seem countable but are actually uncountable. An example is bread. We can count pieces of bread, but we treat the word bread as uncountable

Wrong: I ate two breads.

Right: I ate two pieces of bread.

What are some examples of uncountable nouns in a business context?

Common uncountable nouns that we might find in a business context are:

equipment	work	time*
software	information	hardware
stuff	advice	food
staff	furniture	feedback

*Note that the word time has multiple meanings. One meaning (occasion) is countable, while the other (abstract time) is uncountable.

I don't have much time. (uncountable)

I have been there three times. (countable)

How do I use uncountable nouns?

We do not use plural forms or numbers with uncountable nouns. We do not precede them with a/an, which means 'one'. We can use words such as some and a lot of, but we cannot use the word many.

Wrong: Let me give you advices.

Wrong: Let me give you two advices.

Wrong: Let me give you an advice.

Right: Let me give you some advice.

Right: I gave him a lot of advice.

Wrong: I gave him many advices.

What are collective nouns?

There are also collective nouns, which confuse many language learners in a similar way. A collective noun, such as the word team, refers to a group of things. We can say, 'The team is...' (referring to it as one unit) or we can say, 'The team are...' (referring to the individuals who make up the team).

Note that the words staff and furniture are collective nouns.

Right: You have nice furniture. (all the items of furniture)

Wrong: This is a nice furniture.

Right: The staff are all present today.

Wrong: Joey is a good staff.

Exercises

1 I need more _____ before I can make a decision

- A) information B) informations

2 I work long _____ in my job.

- A) hour B) hours

3 Most of our _____ are very happy with our products.

- A) customer B) customers

4 We bought some new _____ for our factory.

- A) equipment B) equipments

5 Can I ask you for some _____ on the new website?

- A) advice B) advices

6 I have such a lot of _____ to do.

- A) work B) works

7 Several _____ were made about the manager.

- A) complaint B) complaints

8 I downloaded some new _____ for my office PC.

- A) software B) softwares

9 I saw some interesting _____ at the exhibition.

- A) stuff B) stuffs

10 There are _____ on the second floor.

- A) cubicle B) cubicles

11 We just opened some _____ in China.

- A) factory B) factories

12 Maybe we should get some new _____ for the reception area.

- A) furniture B) furnitures

13 I ate croissants many _____ when I was in Paris.

- A) time B) times

14 I need to check some _____ on my phone.

- A) message B) messages

15 The _____ are unhappy that this year's bonus is so small.

- A) staff B) staffs

16 Sarah has plenty of _____ to work on the report.

- A) time B) times

17 My manager asked me to write out all my _____ for this month.

- A) goal B) goals

18 We all have different _____ about it.

- A) opinion B) opinions

19 The IT manager wants to buy some new _____ for his programmers.

- A) hardware B) hardwares

20 I saw some great _____ on their website.

- A) offer B) offers

21 That cafe serves yummy _____ for lunch.

- A) food B) foods

22 They export most of their _____ to Asia.

- A) product B) products

23 We should ask for _____ from our customers.

- A) feedback B) feedbacks

24 We will arrange more training _____ for our employees.

- A) session B) sessions

Answer Key

1 A)	2 B)	3 B)	4 A)	5 A)
6 A)	7 B)	8 A)	9 A)	10 B)
11 B)	12 A)	13 B)	14 B)	15 A)
16 A)	17 B)	18 B)	19 A)	20 B)
21 A)	22 B)	23 A)	24 B)	