**Nouns that can be countable and uncountable**

Sometimes, the same noun can be countable and uncountable, often with a change of meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countable</th>
<th>Uncountable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are two hairs in my coffee!</td>
<td>hair I don’t have much hair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are two lights in our bedroom.</td>
<td>light Close the curtain. There’s too much light!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shhhhh! I thought I heard a noise.</td>
<td>noise It’s difficult to work when there is too much noise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you got a paper to read? (= newspaper)</td>
<td>paper I want to draw a picture. Have you got some paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our house has seven rooms.</td>
<td>room Is there room for me to sit here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had a great time at the party.</td>
<td>time Have you got time for a coffee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Macbeth</em> is one of Shakespeare’s greatest works.</td>
<td>work I have no money. I need work!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drinks (coffee, water, orange juice) are usually uncountable. But if we are thinking of a cup or a glass, we can say (in a restaurant, for example):

- Two teas and one coffee please.
Some nouns are countable in other languages but **uncountable in English**. Some of the most common of these are:

**UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS**

Some English nouns usually cannot form a plural or be preceded by a, an or a number. Because they usually cannot be preceded by a number, such nouns can be referred to as **uncountable**. English uncountable nouns include:

- **a)** nouns naming intangible things which normally cannot be counted:
  - e.g. honesty
  - courage
  - impatience

- **b)** nouns naming tangible things which are thought of as substances:
  - e.g. butter
  - milk
  - sand

- **c)** nouns naming groups of things which in English are referred to collectively:
  - e.g. furniture
  - baggage
  - news

- **d)** names of languages:
  - e.g. English
  - German
  - Spanish

An uncountable noun takes a singular verb.

- e.g. Honesty is a virtue.
  - Butter tastes good.
  - Furniture was provided.