

Look at the following sentences:

I bought two bananas and three oranges.

I also bought rice and flour.



Bananas and oranges are foods that can be counted. (One banana, two bananas, three bananas, four bananas etc.)

Bananas and oranges are examples of countable nouns.

Rice and flour can't be counted. (~~One rice, two rice~~ - Incorrect)

Rice and flour are examples of **uncountable nouns**.

Countable nouns can be singular (a banana) or plural (many bananas).

We can put **a (or an)** in front of **countable nouns**. We can add an **s** to the end of a countable noun to make it plural.

We can use **a few, fewer** and **many** in front of countable nouns.

I eat a few bananas each day.

Do you eat many oranges?

We use **any + a plural** noun in negatives and questions.

Do you have any oranges?

I'm sorry. I don't have any oranges today.

We use **some + a plural noun** in a positive sentence.

There are some oranges on the tree in our garden.

Uncountable nouns can only be singular. Some kinds of food and drink are uncountable. They are things that we cannot divide: things we can't count. You need to learn which foods and drinks in English are uncountable.

Examples of uncountable nouns that are related to food and drink:

* **water, wine, beer, tea, coffee, milk, corn, beef, bread, butter, cheese, chicken, pasta, sugar, salt**

Lamb, chicken and other meats are usually uncountable when we are talking about lamb meat, chicken meat etc.

When we are talking about an animal, the animal is countable.

Chicken is my favourite meat. (Uncountable)

Have you got many chickens on your farm? (Countable)



(Sometimes, we may want to say we bought a whole (dead) chicken. It is countable because we think of the bird as one thing that we can count.)

I bought a whole chicken for dinner tonight. I'm going to roast it.



When we buy fish meat, it is uncountable. If we are talking about the fish as an animal, it is countable.

We do not put **a** or **an** in front of uncountable nouns. We do not add an **s** to the end of the word.

~~*I bought a bread and a butter.*~~ **Incorrect**

We can use **much, a little** and **less** with uncountable nouns.

Is there much cheese left? Yes, there is a little cheese.



We use **any** with an uncountable noun in questions and negatives.

Do you have any butter? I'm sorry. We don't have any.

We use **some** with an uncountable noun in a positive sentence.

I have got some bread and some cheese.

I like to have some milk with my tea.

Some is also used in requests.

Can I please have some more bread?



A lot of and **lots of** can be used with both uncountable and countable nouns in positive sentences.

You can have lots of rice or a lot of noodles. If you don't want those there are lots of potatoes!

Note: Tea, coffee etc are uncountable but sometimes we say this in cafes:

Can I have a coffee please? (This means a cup of coffee. We can use a in front of coffee in this.)

Two beers please. (This means two glasses of beer.)



Exercise 1

Correct the mistakes in these sentences.

- a. There is a few rice in the pot.
- b. I will cook any more rice.
- c. I will have any potatoes, please.
- d. You should eat less hamburgers and more vegetables.
- e. I eat fewer bread now and more spaghetti.
- f. Please have some more pastas. There is plenty!
- g. Would you like a milk with your coffee?
- h. No thanks, I don't want some milk.

Exercise 2

Write the words **some** or **any** in the gaps below.

- a. Could I have chocolate. I'm sorry, there isn't .
- b. I'd like chicken and rice, please.
- c. I am going to buy beef for lunch.
- d. There isn't more cheese. I'll buy more.
- e. I'd love oranges and apples. There aren't oranges or apples on our trees at the moment.

Answer Key:

Exercise 1

- a. There is a little rice in the pot.
- b. I will cook some more rice.
- c. I will have some potatoes, please.
- d. You should eat fewer hamburgers and more vegetables.
- e. I eat less bread now and more spaghetti.
- f. Please have some more pasta. There is plenty!
- g. Would you like (some) milk with your coffee?
- h. No thanks, I don't want any milk.

Exercise 2:

- a. some, any
- b. some, some
- c. some
- d. any, some
- e. some, some, any.

