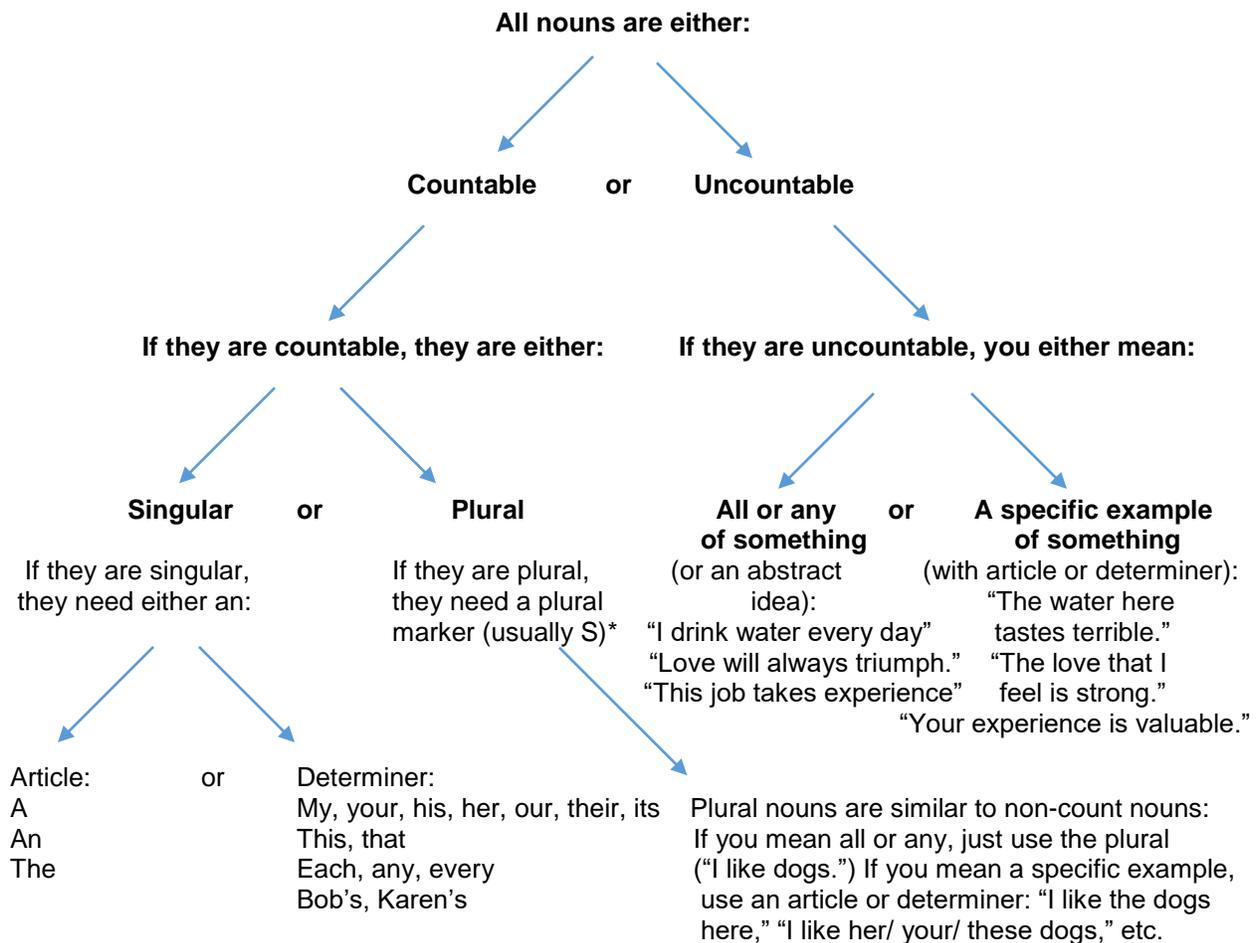




Nouns, Articles, and Determiners

The most common error students make is with noun phrases. You have to ask yourself if a noun is countable or uncountable. With very few exceptions – like shorthand forms used in titles, for example – **singular, countable nouns ALWAYS require an article or determiner.** Other forms can also take articles or determiners. Please study the chart below carefully, before trying the exercises!



For now, let's focus on singular, countable nouns, taking the word "pen" as an example. There are uncountable forms of "pen," meaning "ink," as in, "this letter is written in pen." But if we mean "pen" as a singular countable noun – a thing - we can never just have the word "pen" in a sentence. You can never say, "is this pen?" "Can I borrow pen?" "Do you have pen?" "Where is pen?" You can, however, say:

This is a pen. → Tells us what type of thing something is: it is "one thing of this kind."

This is the pen that you lent me. → There is only one pen in the circumstance, and the listener and speaker know exactly which pen it is.



Is this your pen? → Here, the important information is whose pen it is. We usually use possessive pronouns if the relationship of the thing and its owner is important.

Hand me that pen over there. → We use “this” or “that” to point out specific pens.

Practice: Find and fix the mistakes in the sentences. First, find the noun, then ask yourself, is the noun countable or uncountable? If it is countable, is it singular or plural? If it is singular, does it have an article or determiner? If so, do you want “a” or “the” or something else? If it is plural, does it have a plural marker (-s)? If it is plural or uncountable, do you mean all or any of the thing, or a specific example? If it is an abstraction, like “love” or “experience,” do you mean the idea in general, or a specific instance of it?

Sometimes there may be more than one way to fix a sentence, but all of the sentences have mistakes!

1. Would you like bag with that?
2. High employee turnover can be reduced by providing incentive for peoples to stay at company.
3. Have you ever used computer program to practice typings?
4. Could you bring these report to office?
5. Crust of pie that you made was really delicious, but a filling was not so good.
6. Do you need helps?
7. The wastage can be serious problem in company like this.
8. Having recycling bin near a door helps to reduce wastes.
9. Her the computer skill need to be improved before she can do job here.
10. I don't have times to finish assignment now, but I will in evening.
11. I did not bring notebook with me; do you have piece of a paper I can borrow?
12. Job has excellent benefit and good a salary, but the hour is long.
13. I am afraid I will be little late for the work the morning; I had accident on way here.
14. I would like to look at menu before I order; and can you tell me what daily special is?
15. Veggie burgers at restaurant next to bookstore are best in Lower Mainland.
16. Canada has provinces, Japan has prefectures, and United States has states. What about country where you are from?
17. Thank you for having chosen hotel. I hope you were very satisfied with service and amenities.
18. Management sent note to service staff asking them to please clean windows on second Thursday of the every month.
19. I had the really good experience at a park that I went to the last night.
20. Can you tell me name of good Nepalese the restaurant near here?
21. Power Point presentation that you gave during lecture was really interesting.
22. Who is person who changes fluorescent lights in building?
23. I hate rain, normally, but summer I am glad for it, since it will help stop forest fires.

Answers will depend on your intended meaning, but possible correct answers are: 1. “a bag” 2. “an incentive,” or “incentives;” “people;” “a/ the company,” or “companies” 3. “a computer program” or “computer programs;” “typing.” 4. “reports;” “the office” (or “our office,” “my office,” etc.) 5. “The crust of the pie,” “the filling.” 6. “help” 7. “Wastage;” “a serious problem;” “a company” 8. “a” or “the” recycling bin, depending on your intended meaning; “the door;” “waste.” 9. “her computer skills;” “the job” or “her job” 10. “the time;” “the assignment” (or “this assignment”); “the evening.” 11. “a notebook;” “a piece of paper” 12. “The job;” “this job;” “my job;” “your job;” etc; “benefits;” “a good salary;” “the hours are” 13. “a little late;” “work;” “this morning;” “an accident” 14. “a menu” or “the menu;” “the daily special” 15. “The veggie burgers;” “the restaurant” (or possibly “that restaurant”); “the bookstore;” “the best;” “the lower mainland. 16. “the United States;” “the country” 17. “our hotel;” “the/ our service and amenities” 18. “The management;” “a note;” “the windows;” “the second Thursday of every month” 19. “a really good experience;” “the park;” “last night.” 20. “the name;” “a good Nepalese restaurant.” 21. “The Power Point presentation;” “the lecture;” or “your lecture.” 22. “the person” “the fluorescent lights” “the/ your/ our building.” 23. Either “the rain” or “rain” are fine; “this summer.” “forest fires” or possibly “the forest fires.”

Please feel free to discuss different answers with your tutor.





This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)