Non-Count Nouns

Overview

Count Nouns:
- May be preceded by a / an in the singular, e.g. a chair or one chair.
- Take a final –s / –es in the plural, e.g. Ø* chairs; two chairs; some chairs; a lot of chairs; many chairs.

Non-count Nouns:
- Are not immediately preceded by a / an.
- Have no plural form, so do not take a final –s / –es, e.g. Ø* furniture; some furniture; a lot of furniture; much furniture.
- * Ø = no article

Example: I bought a chair. Mark bought three chairs.
→ Chair is a count noun; chairs are items that can be counted.

Example: We bought some furniture.
→ Furniture is a non-count noun. In grammar, furniture cannot be counted.
   INCORRECT: We bought some furnitures.
   INCORRECT: We bought a furniture

Non-Count Nouns
To express a particular quantity, some non-count nouns may be preceded by unit expressions, e.g. a spoonful of sugar, a glass of water, a cup of coffee, a bowl of soup, a piece of jewelry, a piece of paper

Many non-count nouns refer to a “whole” that is made up of different parts:
   Example: I bought 4 chairs, 2 tables, and a desk. In other words, I bought some furniture.
   → Furniture represents a whole group of things made up of similar but separate items.

Example: I put some sugar in my coffee.
→ Sugar and coffee represent whole masses made up of similar particles or elements.
Many non-count nouns are abstractions:

**Example:** I wish you luck.

→ Luck is an abstract concept, an abstract “whole.” It has no physical form; you can’t touch it. You can’t count it.

A phenomenon of nature, e.g. sunshine, is frequently used as a non-count noun:

- **Example:** Sunshine is warm and cheerful.

Many nouns are used as non-count or count nouns, but the meaning is different:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NONCOUNT</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann has brown hair.</td>
<td>Rodrigo has a hair on his jacket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I opened the curtains to let in some light.</td>
<td>Turn off the light before you go to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Some Common Non-Count Nouns**

**Whole groups made up of similar items:** baggage, clothing, equipment, food, fruit, furniture, garbage, hardware, jewelry, junk, luggage, machinery, mail, makeup, money / cash / change, postage, scenery, traffic, etc.

**Fluids:** water, coffee, tea, milk, oil, soup, gasoline, blood, etc.

**Solids:** ice, bread, butter, cheese, meat, gold, glass, paper, wood, cotton, etc.

**Gases:** steam, air, oxygen, nitrogen, smoke, smog, pollution, etc.

**Particles:** rice, chalk, corn, dirt, flour, grass, salt, sand, sugar, wheat, etc.

**Abstractions:**

- beauty, confidence, education, enjoyment, fun, intelligence, knowledge, patience, sleep, truth, wealth, etc.
- advice, information, research, news, proof, evidence, etc.

**Languages:** Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish, etc.

**Fields of study:** chemistry, engineering, history, literature, etc.

**Recreation:** soccer, hockey, tennis, chess, poker, etc.

**Activities:** driving, studying, swimming, travelling, etc.

**Natural phenomenon:** weather, heat, humidity, rain, lightening, snow, wind, fire.