

Academic English Countable and uncountable with the same meaning

Instructions for teachers

Cut up one pack of cards per group of two to four students, then make one more copy per student. Each group spreads their pack of cards across the table and matches up pairs of words with similar meanings. When they have nearly finished ask them what the differences are each time (= one in each pair is countable, i.e. often takes “-s”, and the other is uncountable), then ask them to work together to guess which is which in each pair. This should also help those groups who are still trying to match the pairs up. Give out the extra copies of the worksheet for them to check their answers with. (The cards are matched in the table with the uncountable one on the left each time.)

They can then test each other on the vocabulary by:

- saying a countable and uncountable pair and seeing if their partner can say which is which
- saying a countable and uncountable pair and seeing if their partner can repeat back the right one with -s
- saying a countable one and seeing if their partner can say the matching uncountable one
- saying an uncountable one and seeing if their partner can say the matching countable one
- saying any one and seeing if their partner can say the matching one
- saying both of a pair with -s and seeing if their partner can say which is wrong
- choosing a word for their partner to make an example sentence with

Uncountable	Countable	Uncountable	Countable
violence	attack	advice	recommendation
research	academic paper	automation	machine
equipment	device	evidence	clue
body language	gesture	homework	assignment
work/ labour	job	jargon	technical term
knowledge	fact	significance	meaning
progress	improvement	software	program
training/ education	course	transport/ transportation	vehicle
travel	journey	trouble	problem
vocabulary	word	staff/ workforce	employee
availability	supply	destruction	collapse
communication	conversation	land/ property	estate
money	fee/ charge	finance	loan
intelligence	mind/ brain	legislation	law
maintenance	repair	military	army
thinking	notion/ idea	technology	gadget
status	position		