

## Countable and uncountable nouns in IELTS Speaking and Writing

### Countable and uncountable nouns in IELTS Speaking Part One

*Take turns asking two questions from two sections below.*

#### Accommodation/ Local area

Do you live in a house or a flat?

Do you have enough space in the place where you are living?

Do you have many ornaments in your home?

Do you have any furniture that you'd like to get rid of?

#### Arts and media

Do you read any newspapers?

What kind of news is most interesting to you?

#### Books/ Literature/ Writing

Do you read many novels?

Do you generally prefer fiction or non-fiction?

What different types of writing do you do?

Do you like to write stories or poems?

#### Education/ Studies

Do you need any qualifications for your career?

Is there any training which you would like to take?

Did you have much homework when you were in primary school?

Do you generally get stressed in exams?

Do you do a lot of revision before examinations?

#### English

Do you attend any regular English lessons?

How much time do you spend studying English every week?

#### Family and friends

Do you know your distant relations well?

How much time do you spend with your extended family?

#### Festivals and celebrations

Which are your favourite festivals or celebrations?

On what occasions do you usually buy and drink champagne?

#### Food, drink and cooking

Do you enjoy cooking?

Have you learnt any recipes from your family?

#### Free time

Do you have much free time?

Where do you like to spend your days off?

What do you do for relaxation?

Are there any new hobbies which you'd like to take up?

### **Gifts**

Is gift-giving important for people your age in your country?  
When did you last give or receive a present?

### **Health and fitness**

Do you do much (physical) exercise?  
Do you take any supplements?

### **Hometown**

Is there nice scenery in or near your hometown?

### **Music**

Do you prefer to buy CDs or to download music from the internet?

### **Shopping**

Do you enjoy finding bargains in the summer sales?  
Do you do much window shopping?

### **Technology and the internet**

Do you spend much money on technology?  
Have you bought any new gadgets recently?  
Did you spend much time playing computer games when you were younger?  
Have you ever paid for some expensive software or apps?

### **Transport and travel**

Do you enjoy overseas travel?  
How would you feel if you had regular business trips?  
Are there good public transport connections near where you are living?  
Is public transport expensive in your local area?  
Are there many cycle lanes in your hometown?  
Is parking a problem near where you live?

### **TV**

Do you watch much TV?  
Are there any TV programmes which you really like?

### **Weather**

Are there many storms, hurricanes, etc in your hometown?  
What kind of weather do you dislike?

### **Work and studies**

How important is work to you?  
How many jobs have you had?  
Have you ever worked as a temp?

**Countable and uncountable grammar presentation**

*Without looking above, put -s after the only word in each section below which can needs -s after "some" (= the countable noun). If both seem okay with -s, think about which is OK with "some" and no -s.*

some furniture	some ornament
some news	some newspaper
some (non-)fiction	some novel
some poem	some poetry/ writing
some qualification	some training
some assignment	some homework
some exam/ examination/ test	some review/ revision
some champagne	some festival
some cooking	some recipe
some day off	some free time/ leisure
some hobby/ pastime	some relaxation
some gift-giving	some present/ some gift
some bad habit	some (aerobic/ physical) exercise
some nutrition	some supplement/ vitamin
some scenery	some view
some music	some song/ track/ tune/ chorus/ verse
some bargain/ summer sale	some window shopping
some gadget	some technology
some app/ application	some software
some hour	some time
some business trip/ journey	some travel

some connection	some public transport/ transportation
some cycle lane	some parking
some storm/ hurricane/ typhoon	some weather/ wind/ snow/ rain
some job/ (temporary) worker/ temp	some work/ overtime

*Check above.*

*Try to make generalisations about which kinds of words are usually uncountable.*

*Are these kinds of words usually countable or uncountable?*

- general categories
- specific things
- words ending in -ing

*Ask each other different questions about the same topics.*

### **Brainstorming stage**

*Without looking above, write as many suitable countable and uncountable words as you can in each category below. Many words not above are also possible. Some words can be both countable and uncountable (with slightly or very different meanings), in which case you can put them in both columns.*

*Look at the questions, words and then answers above, and brainstorm more.*

*Compare your other answers with another group or as a class.*

<b>Countable with -s</b>	<b>Uncountable (= -s is wrong)</b>
<b>Accommodation/ Local area</b>	
<b>Arts and media</b>	
<b>Books/ Literature/ Writing</b>	
<b>Education/ Studies</b>	
<b>English</b>	
<b>Family and friends</b>	
<b>Festivals and celebrations</b>	
<b>Food, drink and cooking</b>	
<b>Free time</b>	



<b>Health and fitness</b>	
<b>Hometown</b>	
<b>Music</b>	
<b>Shopping</b>	
<b>Technology and the internet</b>	
<b>Transport and travel</b>	
<b>TV</b>	
<b>Weather</b>	
<b>Work and studies</b>	

**Countable and uncountable in IELTS Speaking Part 3 and IELTS Writing Task 2**

Write -s next to the one line of countable nouns in each section below. You can check by making sure that the noun or nouns on the other line are uncountable by adding an -s and checking that they sound wrong.

**Differences in grammar section**

advice	recommendation/ suggestion/ tip
evidence	figure
research	researcher
academic literature	academic paper
importance	priority
aim/ goal/ purpose	progress
disadvantage	extent
argument against	consensus
support for this position	supporter
effectiveness	measure
reality	solution
logic	reason
popularity	young person
justice	law
legislation	regulation
my (partial) agreement	position/ view
bureaucracy	bureaucrat/ civil servant/ public servant
fact	information
article	news
concept	understanding

**Topics**

advertising	ad/ advert/ advertisement/ commercial
education	course/ class
recyclable bottle	recycling
bin/ trash can/ garbage can	rubbish/ trash/ garbage/ litter/ waste
exercise	sports facility
obesity/ weight	lift weight
factory/ plant	pollution
forest	deforestation
hospital fee	medical spending
motor vehicle	traffic
congestion	traffic jam
diversity	diverse background
accident/ crash	road safety
health	pill/ tablet
foreign aid	subsidy
knowledge	skill
DNA	gene
good idea	well-being
negative effect	stress
secondary education	secondary school
bank	wealth
journey	travelling
employment	employer



cooperation	individual
adolescent/ teenager	immaturity
(job) satisfaction	workplace
feedback	positive comment/ remark
fun	positive attitude
specialist	specialisation
illegal act	illegality
foreign language	foreign language acquisition
creature	wildlife
manufacturer	manufacturing
entertainer	entertainment

**Similar grammar section**

*The ones in each section below have the same grammar. Either add -s to all the examples in a section if it is countable or check that none of the nouns can take -s if you think that section is uncountable.*

academic journal/ essay	academic/ expert
advantage	after-school activity
alcohol	equality
alternative	ancestor
(counter)argument	(negative/ positive) aspect
asset	cause
circumstance/ situation	conclusion/ summary
consequence	drawback
example	fine
(previous) generation	graduate
implication	medium
middle-aged worker	option
paragraph	peer
penalty	positive development
privacy	stability
quotation	result
selling point	side of the argument
subject/ topic	toddler

**Singular, plural and uncountable in IELTS Writing Task 1**

*In each section below only one line has a noun or noun that is countable and therefore can take -s. Write -s anywhere it can go below, making sure that the other line is wrong with -s each time.*

**Different grammar section****Process tasks/ Flowchart tasks**

equipment	machine
progress	step/ stage
heat/ (central) heating	heater
refrigerator/ fridge	refrigeration
cement	grinder
clay	clay pot
concrete	concrete block
grain of sand	sand
gravel	small stone

**Map tasks**

building	construction
bridge	infrastructure
access	road
transport	transport link
car park	parking
grass	sports field
farmland	garden
greenery	tree
housing	retirement home
river	water
countryside	suburb

beach coastline

(foot)path paving

### Line graphs and bar charts

acceleration/ deceleration bar/ line

levelling off plateau/ (all-time/ new) high/ peak

boom growth

### Pie charts

pie chart/ segment market share

### Other kinds of tasks/ General

diagram/ chart information

### For specific topics

dollar income

pound spending

heat temperature

gram/ tonne weight

consumer consumption

mode of transport transport

questionnaire/ survey research

carbon (dioxide) carbon emission

energy consumption power station

electricity unit of electricity

fuel source heating fuel

nuclear power nuclear power station

coal lump of coal

barrel of oil petrol

natural gas pipeline

clothing	item of clothing
telephone call	time spent on the phone
beef	kind of meat
household	housework
hour of sunshine	sunshine
visitor satisfaction	visitor
cigarette	tobacco
footwear	shoe
insurance	insurance policy
animal	grazing

**Similar grammar section**

Identify if each section below is all countable or all uncountable and add -s to those which can take it.

**Map**

place  
location  
site  
entrance

exit  
(main) gate  
block  
island

peninsula  
rail  
railway  
track

**Process**

flowchart  
lifecycle  
larva  
system

**Tables**

column  
row  
figure/ statistic/ number

**General**

comparison  
forecast/ prediction/ projection  
gap  
main feature  
percentage

period  
price  
quantity  
year  
trend