

Extension exercises

Chapter 1: Nouns | Comments

Exploring English

The precise answers to these questions will depend on the languages (and texts) you choose. However:

- 1 depending on the language, it may be primarily the context that makes nouns identifiable, but they may also be identifiable due to:
 - articles and the words that precede them.
 - inflection, for example, endings that show that words are nouns, or which classify them for example as plural, as a direct object or as feminine.
 - the use of capital letters.
- 2 Many languages make no distinction between singular and plural forms in the word. Other languages have a more complex form of marking number in the word. (As well as singular forms there may be dual forms, and forms for plurals below or above a certain number.)
- 3 Not all languages make a grammatical distinction between what is countable and uncountable, and those that do may well make distinctions which are different from English. (In many languages, for example, *soap* is countable.)
- 4 Answers to these questions will depend on the language you have chosen.
- 5 In many European languages collective nouns are always considered to be singular.
- 6 Answers to these questions will depend on the language you have chosen.

Exploring how learners use English

Answers to this question will depend on the proficiency of the learners and, possibly, on their first languages.

The more closely related the language is to English, the more similarities there are likely to be, even to the point of some words being spelt in exactly the same way. The fact that so much else is similar may lead learners who know a closely related language to be distracted by what differences there are. For example, speakers of Latin-based languages may expect *information* to be countable since the same word may exist and be countable in their language.

Course materials

Materials vary greatly in how much attention they pay to the grammatical features of nouns.

They sometimes focus on grammatical features of nouns in sections on 'word-building' (for example, adding suffixes such as *-ion*, *-ness*, *-ence*, or *-ance* to verbs or adjectives to make them into nouns).

Ways of making plural forms of nouns usually receive some attention in the early stages of an elementary course, and countability and uncountability are often taught later at this level, at the same time as *there is* and *there are*. When the material deals explicitly with further aspects of grammar which are affected by the countable/uncountable distinction (for example, *much/many*, *a few/a little*, *fewer/less*), this may then be revised.