ENGLISH

Grammar: Nouns

LANGUAGE
COURSES

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

What are Countable and Uncountable Nouns

- Most nouns can be assessed in quantity.
- We categorise them as **countable** and **uncountable nouns**.

What is a countable noun?

- A countable noun refers to a thing which can be counted using numbers.
- Indefinite articles '**A**' and '**An**' can be used only with countable nouns.
- The definite article 'The' can also be used with countable nouns.
- 'Many' and 'Few' are adjectives associated with countable nouns.

Examples:
House, bat, key, people, phone

She bought two houses.
*How **many** houses did she buy?*

The cave was infested by hundreds of bats.
*How **many** bats infested the cave?*

What are the features of countable nouns?

- They are concrete and specific.
- They are independent things which have to be considered separately from others of their kind.
    - Box, toy, cup, jar
- Indefinite articles 'A' and 'An' can be used only with countable nouns.
    - I need a knife.
    - An old man was at the door.
- We can use the definite article 'The' with countable nouns.
    - Try the cake.
    - The cat is out of the bag.
- Determiners like 'That', 'This', 'These' and 'Those' can be used with countable nouns.
    - That man is innocent.
    - Those books are mine.

What is an uncountable noun?

- An uncountable noun refers to a thing which cannot be counted but measured.
- They answer the question 'How much?'
- The definite article 'The' can be used with uncountable nouns.
- We cannot use indefinite articles with uncountable nouns.
- 'Much' and 'less' are the adjectives associated with uncountable nouns.

Examples:

Milk, water, flour, basalt, air, kerosene, freedom

Pour some milk into the coffee.
How __much__ milk should be poured into the coffee?

A lot of water has been wasted.
How __much__ water has been wasted?

What are the features of uncountable nouns?

- They are to be considered in mass.
- They cannot be considered as separate, independent things.
  - Powder, syrup, sugar.
- They are usually used with no articles (zero articles).
  - Can you give me coffee?
  - Laughter is the best medicine.
- The definite article 'The' can be used with uncountable nouns.
  - We live in the golden age.
  - Eat the soup before it gets cold.
- We cannot use indefinite articles ('A' and 'An') with uncountable nouns.
- Things in powdered, liquid or gaseous forms are uncountable nouns.

Note:
You can use an uncountable noun in the countable sense by adding a phrase which indicates quantity.

__A loaf of__ bread
__A lump of__ jaggery
__Two bags of__ rice

Using Adjectives with Countable and Uncountable Nouns

- Adjectives are used to quantify countable and uncountable nouns.
- Adjectives of number and indefinite adjectives are used with countable nouns.
  - Ten ducks were flying towards the south.
  - Samuel invited twenty people to his party.
  - Some students were sent home.
  - The amateur chefs baked many cupcakes.

- Indefinite adjectives are used with uncountable nouns.
  - I have a little time.
  - So much water has been wasted by the residents.
  - Vandana has no patience.
  - The moneylender sold it for a lesser amount.

Some indefinite adjectives are specific to countable and uncountable nouns.

Countable	Uncountable
Few	Little
Fewer	Less/lesser
Many	Much

Examples:

- Few people value time.

- A little kerosene was still left in the lamp.

- Many trees were cut down.

- Much time was wasted.

- By the end of the day, fewer coins were left in my pocket.
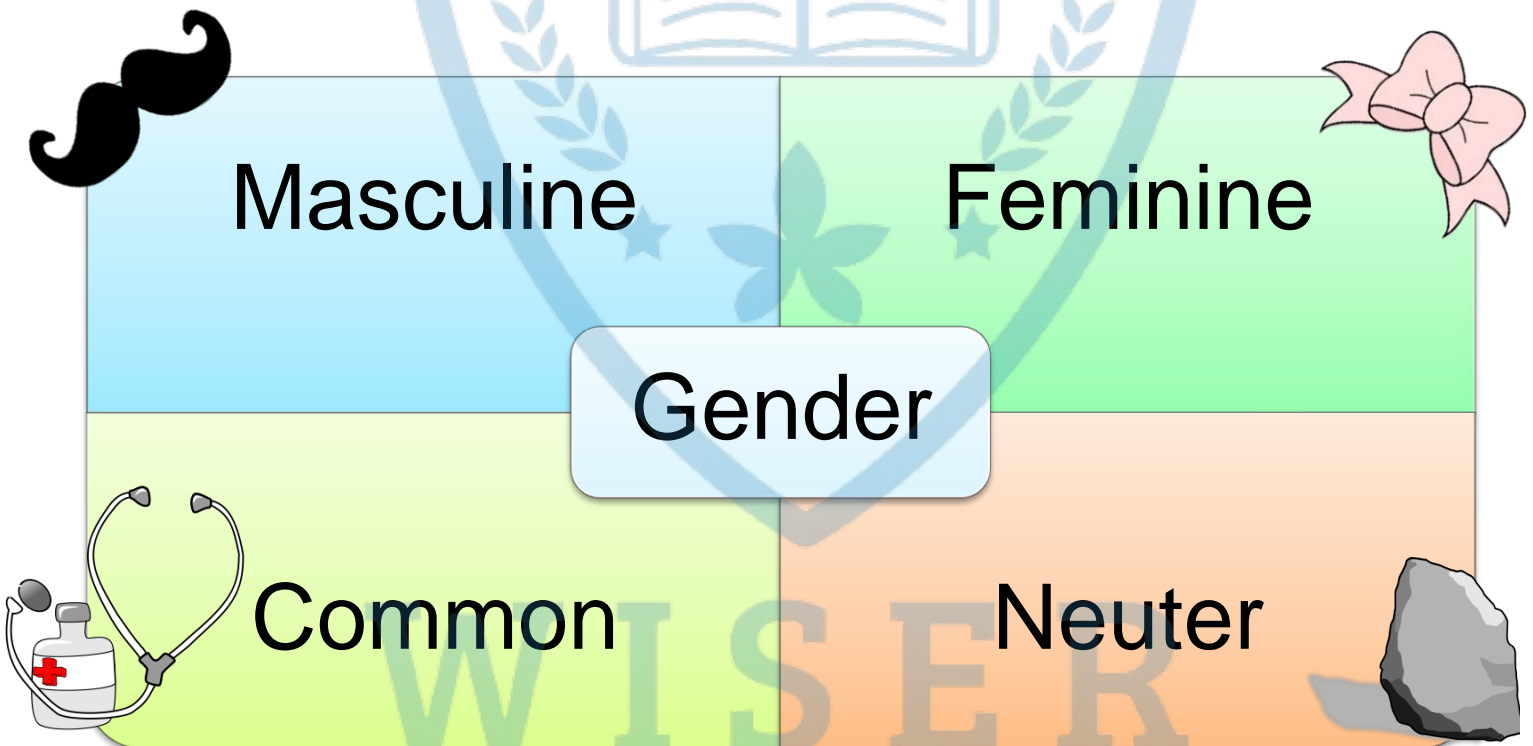
- I need less water.

Nouns: Gender

Gender

In grammar, **gender** refers to the sex of the noun. We use grammatical gender to refer to human beings, animals, plants, ideas and things. We shall learn about identifying the gender of the nouns in this chapter.

What are the Types of Grammatical Gender?
We can divide gender into **four** categories:

- Masculine gender
- Feminine gender
- Common gender
- Neuter gender

Masculine

Feminine

Gender
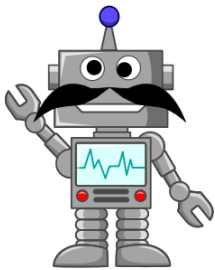
Common

Neuter

Masculine Gender

- **Masculine gender** is used to refer to nouns which are **male** (human and animal).

Gentleman	Peacock	Actor	Stag	Bull	King

- It also refers to nouns associated with strength, harshness and aggression.
    o The Sun bears down on the Earth with **his** hot rays.
    o Power is a strange friend; **his** friendship is never permanent.

Pronouns for Masculine Gender
- Masculine gender nouns agree with masculine pronouns.

Subject: He
Object: Him
Possessive: His
Possessive adjective: His
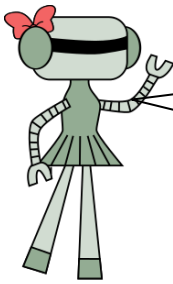**Reflexive**: Himself

Feminine Gender

- Feminine gender is used to refer to nouns which are female (human and animal).

Lady	Peahen	Actress	Doe	Cow	Queen

- It is also used to refer to nouns which are associated with gentleness, love and softness.
  - The ship cradled us like we were **her** children.
  - Spring blesses us with **her** bounty.

Pronouns for Feminine Gender

Subject: She
Object: Her
Possessive: Hers
Possessive adjective: Her
Reflexive: Herself

Common Gender

- Common gender is used to refer to nouns which stand for both male and female.

Doctor	Professor	Preacher	Animal	Person	Imposter

Examples:

The Vice President is not there at **his/her** office.
The instructor gave us **his/her email** address.
The celebrity spoke about **his/her** private life.
My cousin is in love with **his/her** friend.

Pronouns for Common Gender

Since these nouns can refer to both genders, **masculine** and **feminine** pronouns can be used to refer to them.
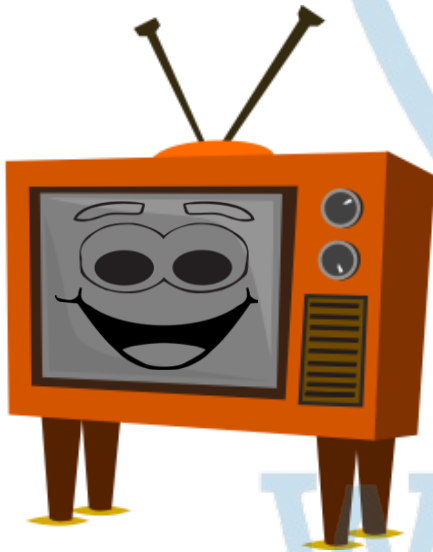
Neuter Gender

- **Neuter gender** is used to refer to things which are non-living.

Pillar	Place	Computer	Fruit	Building	Cup

- Apart from concrete nouns, neuter gender nouns also refer to abstract nouns.

Life	Sadness	Joy	Optimism	Beauty	Success

Pronouns for Neuter Gender

Subject: It
Object: It
Possessive: Its
Possessive Adjective: Its
Reflexive: Itself

Changing Gender of Nouns

Nouns can be changed from masculine to feminine in the following ways:

- By using a completely different word

Masculine	Feminine
Man	Woman
Gander	Goose
Bachelor	Spinster
Monk	Nun

- By using suffixes like '-ess'

Masculine	Feminine
Baron	Baroness
Lion	Lioness
Patron	Patroness
Shepherd	Shepherdess

- By using suffixes like '-trix'

Masculine	Feminine
Bellator	Bellatrix
Executer	Executrix
Testator	Testatrix

- By dropping the vowel at the end of the masculine noun and adding 'ess'

Masculine	Feminine
Actor	Actress
Hunter	Huntress
Tiger	Tigress
Seamster	Seamstress

- By using the pronoun 'She' as a prefix and joining it to the main word with a hyphen

Masculine	Feminine
Wolf	She-wolf
Devil	She-devil
Goat	She-goat
Fox	She-fox

How to Change the Gender of Compound Nouns?

- **Compound nouns** are made of two or more nouns.

Toothbrush	Milkman	Cleaning lady	Peahen

- The gender of a compound noun can be changed by modifying a part of the noun by making it feminine or masculine.
- If the compound noun is formed out of one part noun, change the gender of that noun.

Great-**uncle**	Great-**aunt**	Land**lord**	Land**lady**
Bell**boy**	Bell**girl**	**Billy** goat	**Nanny** goat
Queen bee	**Drone** bee	**Queen** cat	**Tom** cat
Pea**cock**	Pea**hen**	**She**-wolf	**He**-wolf

Nouns: Number

What is Number in Grammar?

Previously, we learnt that nouns can be either **singular** or **plural**.

What is Singular and Plural?

- When one is speaking about a single thing, person, place or idea, the noun used is **singular**.
- When one is speaking about more than one thing, person, place or idea, the noun used is **plural**.

Let us consider the following examples:

Singular	Plural
Cherry	Cherries
Witch	Witches
Potato	Potatoes

- As is evident from the table above, the noun undergoes a change while turning from singular to plural.
- Most nouns become plural on the addition of '–s' at its end. Example: Stone – Stones
- In English, the rules for changing the number of the nouns are quite diverse.
- In this chapter, we shall learn these rules that govern the number of nouns.

Changing Singular Nouns into Plural Nouns

Nouns ending with –s, –ss, –sh, –ch, –x

- Nouns ending with **'–s'**, **'–ss'**, **'–sh'**, **'–ch'** and **'–x'** become plural on the addition of **'–es'**.

Singular	Plural
Bus	Buses
Dress	Dresses
Brush	Brushes
Church	Churches
Box	Boxes

Nouns ending with consonant + o

- Some nouns ending with a consonant + o structure become plural on the addition of **'–es'**.

Singular	Plural
Superhero	Superheroes
Echo	Echoes
Tomato	Tomatoes
Archipelago*	Archipelagoes

- Some nouns ending with a consonant + o structure become plural on the addition of **'–s'**.

Singular	Plural
Banjo	Banjos
Piano	Pianos
Kangaroo	Kangaroos

- Some nouns ending with a consonant + o structure become plural on the addition of both **'–es'** or **'–s'**.

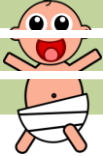| Singular	Plural
Buffalo	Buffaloes/buffalos
Halo	Haloes/halos
Desperado*	Desperadoes/desperados

Archipelago* – group of islands
Desperado* – (in Spanish) a reckless criminal who would do anything for money

Nouns ending with '–y'

- The plural form of some nouns ending with '**–y**' is formed by removing '**y**' from the word and replacing it with '**–ies**'.
- These nouns end with a consonant **+ y** structure.

Singular	Plural
Baby	Babies
Penny	Pennies
Theory	Theories

- Some nouns ending with '**–y**' become plural on the addition of '**s**'.
- These nouns end with a **vowel + y** structure.

Singular	Plural
Boy	Boys
Way	Ways
Essay	Essays

- Proper nouns ending with '**–y**' become plural on the addition of '**s**'.

Singular	Plural
Reddy	The Reddys
McCauley	The McCauleys
Kennedy	The Kennedys

Nouns ending with '–f' and '–fe'

- The plural form of some nouns ending with '**–f**' or '**–fe**' is formed by replacing the letters with '**–ves**'.

Singular	Plural
Calf	Calves
Loaf	Loaves
Wife	Wives

- Some of these nouns become plural on the addition of '**s**'.

Singular	Plural
Puff	Puffs
Hoot	Hoots
Giraffe	Giraffes

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Abbreviations and Numbers

- Abbreviations and numbers become plural on the addition of **'s'**.

> In the **_1950s_**, cinema became popular.
> They came in sets of **_threes_**.
> The **_CVs_** of the candidates were examined.
> The **_IITs_** are premier engineering institutes in India.

Compound Nouns

- The plural of compound nouns is formed either by adding **'s'** in the end or by making the most important word in the compound plural.

Singular	Plural
Brother-in-law	Brothers-in-law
She-wolf	She-wolves
Paintbrush	Paintbrushes

- There are also some variations in certain compound nouns.

Singular	Plural (old)	Plural (new)
Cupful	Cupsful	Cupfuls
Spoonful	Spoonsful	Spoonfuls
Basketful	Basketsful	Basketfuls

Nouns which are always singular

- Some abstract nouns are always considered singular.

> Examples:
> **Patience is** a virtue.
> **Information has** been made available to anyone who seeks it.
> Delilah's **advice was** to add a bit of sugar to the jam.
> **The damage is** done.

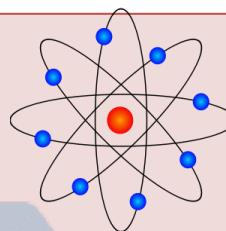- Some uncountable nouns are considered singular.

> Examples:
> **The furniture was** sold by the Sharmas.
> **Rapunzel's hair is** golden.
> **Pure water has** become a rare commodity.
> **The jewellery is** stolen.

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- Singular nouns ending with **'–s'** are used with singular verbs.
- They may seem plural but are actually singular.

> Examples:
> **Mumps is** a contagious disease.
> **Economics has been** my favourite subject for three years.
> **Politics was** of great interest to her.
> **Thermodynamics is** a branch of Physics.

Nouns which are always plural

- Some collective nouns are always used with plural verbs.
- They may seem singular but are actually plural.

> Examples:
> **The police are** on their way.
> **The public have** selected their representative.
> **The gentry were** worried about the fate.
> **The clergy are** a corrupt lot.
> **The cattle**, which **were** grazing by the river, ran helter-skelter.
> **Vermin have** infested the old apartment.

- Some common nouns are always in the plural form.

> Examples:
> **These designer goggles are** very expensive.
> **Are my pants** ironed?
> **Those goods were** delivered on time.
> **The remains of the ancient town were** discovered by the team of archeologists.
> **Do these scissors have** a case?

Nouns that do not change form

- Some nouns do not change form when they become plural from singular.

Singular	Plural
Sheep	Sheep
Deer	Deer
Fish	Fish
Trout	Trout
Salmon	Salmon
Moose	Moose
Aircraft	Aircraft

Foreign Words

- Some nouns in English are borrowed from other languages like **Greek** and **Latin**.
- These nouns do not follow the same rules as other nouns when it comes to numbers.
- The rules governing these words are distinct to their language of origin.
- Some singular foreign nouns ending with **'–um'** or **'–on'** become plural when the letters are replaced by **'a'**.

Singular	Plural
Bacterium	Bacteria
Criterion	Criteria
Datum	Data
Memorandum	Memoranda

- Some nouns of foreign origin ending with **'–a'** become plural when **'e'** is added.

Singular	Plural
Formula	Formulae
Antenna	Antennae
Alga	Algae
Larva	Larvae

> This is a traditional rule. These days, you can use 's' at the end of the word to make it plural.
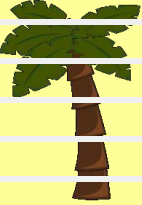> Examples: Formulas, antennas

- Some nouns of foreign origin ending with **'–us'** become plural when **'i'** is added instead.

Singular	Plural
Syllabus	Syllabi
Alumnus	Alumni
Focus	Foci
Cactus	Cacti
Bacillus	Bacilli
Stimulus	Stimuli

- Nouns of foreign origin ending with **'–ex'** and **'–ix'** become plural when **'ices'** is added to them.

Singular	Plural
Index	Indices
Codex	Codices
Apex	Apices/apexes
Appendix	Appendices
Matrix	Matrices

- Nouns of foreign origin ending with **'–is'** become plural when **'is'** is dropped and is replaced by **'es'**.

Singular	Plural
Crisis	Crises
Analysis	Analyses
Ellipsis	Ellipses
Parenthesis	Parentheses
Hypothesis	Hypotheses
Oasis	Oases

- Nouns of foreign origin ending with **'–eau'** take either **'–eaux'** or **'–s'** in the end when they become plural.

Singular	Plural
Tableau	Tableaus/tableaux
Chateau	Chateaus/chateaux
Bureau	Bureaus/bureaux

Nouns - Possessive Case

What is the Possessive Case?

Let us examine the following phrases:

Maria's uncle
Suchita's mother
Mohsin's car
Abel's house
The giraffe's neck
The gorilla's hands
My friend's sister

- In each of the phrases above, the nouns in **blue** belong to the nouns indicated in **red**.
- The apostrophe sign (') is an indicator of the **red noun's** possession.
- This is known as **possessive case** in grammar.
- It answers the question 'Whose?'
- For example, 'Whose uncle? Maria's uncle'.

Relationships Expressed through the Possessive Case

Apart from possession, the possessive case also denotes relationships such as **origin**, **type**, **quality** and **authorship**.

Relationship	Possessive Case		
Ownership	Lalith's restaurant	Shiva's office	Gurmeet's pet
Origin	Israel's Prime Minister	Cuba's cigars	Gandhiji's Satyagraha
Type	Mother's love	Children's wear	Doctor's coat
Quality	Meena's intelligence	Simon's patience	Mustafa's perseverance
Authorship	Hemingway's novel	Wordsworth's poems	Da Vinci's Last Supper

Formation of Possessive Cases

Certain rules are applicable while forming possessive cases from nouns.

Singular Nouns

- When it comes to singular nouns, we have to affix an apostrophe with an **'s'** at the end of the word.

> The minister's vehicle
> The farmer's house
> The cat's purr
> The clown's large ears

- An exception to this case will be when the noun itself ends with the letter **'s'**. In such cases, only an apostrophe **(')** will suffice.

> The linguistics' theories
> Diabetes' progression
> Success' tale
> Goodness' sake

- This exception is also seen in words ending with a **hissing sound** (sss). Even in such cases, only an apostrophe can be put at the end of the word.

> My conscience' voice
> Justice' sake

Plural Nouns

- For plural nouns ending in s, the apostrophe is added at the end of the word after the **'s'**.

> The boys' shoes
> The girls' hostel
> The workers' association
> The farmers' livelihood

- An exception to this case is seen in plural nouns which do not end in 's'.
- In such cases, **'s** is added to the end of the word.

> Children's day
> Women's association
> Men's club
> Oxen's shed

Proper Noun

- For proper nouns,**'s** is added at the end of the word.

> Meena's telescope
> Fatima's paintings
> Aarti's husband
> Lal Bahadur's morals

- An exception to this rule is seen in proper nouns ending in **'s'**.
- In such cases, an apostrophe is put at the end of the word.

> Tejas' aunt
> Alexis' car
> Charles' wife
> Vikas' school

Titles and Compound Nouns

- For titles (made of more than one word) and compound nouns, the apostrophe is put at the end of the last word.

The Prime Minister of India's speech
The Duchess of York's picture
The Statue of Liberty's location
His mother-in-law's house

Note:
In the case of non-living things, avoid using an apostrophe to show possession. Though it is not entirely wrong, it can sound awkward. Use 'The wheel of the car' instead of 'The car's wheel'.

Nouns: Types of Nouns

Revision

Previously, we learnt that nouns are names given to people, places, ideas or things. Let us now learn about the types of nouns.

Types of Nouns

- The types of nouns which we will learn in this chapter are
    - Common noun
    - Proper noun
    - Abstract noun
    - Collective noun

Common Noun

- **Common nouns** are names which are given commonly to people, places, things or ideas of the same kind.
- In other words, it is a name shared by all the members of a given category.

> The **soldier** bid goodbye to his **wife**.
>
> The little **house** had a tiny **window**.

- In the above examples, the underlined words **soldier**, **wife**, **house** and **window** are not special names.
- They are common names given to all the members of the category.

Proper Noun

- **Proper nouns** are specific names given to people, places or things.
- They begin with capital or uppercase letters.

> **Mr Roy** is the Vice President of **Acme Technologies**.
>
> **Paris** is one of the great centres of culture.

- In the above examples, the underlined words **Roy**, **Acme Technologies** and **Paris** are specific names.
- Sometimes, proper nouns can be used as common nouns.

> There are two **Marys** in my class.
>
> An **Ayodhya** emerges on the banks of a **Sarayu**.

- In the first case, the plural form of **Mary** is used to signify a category of girls who are named Mary.
- In the second case, using indefinite articles with the proper noun **Ayodhya** and **Sarayu** signifies one of many.

Abstract Noun

- An abstract noun is a name given to **qualities**, **feelings**, **ideas**, **beliefs**, **areas of study** and **time periods**.
- Abstract nouns represent things that exist as notions and which do not have a physical form.

> **Childhood** is an important time in a person's **life**.
>
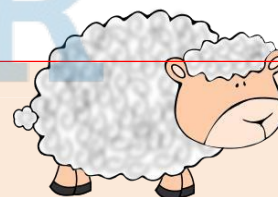> **Philosophy** is a complicated **subject**.

- In the above examples, the underlined words **childhood**, **life**, **philosophy** and **subject** are names given to notions which do not have physical forms.

Collective Noun

- A collective noun is a name given to a group or a collection.
- The things which constitute a collection are taken as a whole.

> The little sheep strayed away from **the herd**.
>
> Miss Glamour was one among the **bevy of beauties** who ruled Hollywood in the 60s.

- In the above examples, the underlined words **herd** and **bevy** of beauties represent a group or a collection of things.