

7. Countable and uncountable nouns

Alan and Sara talking about advertising a spare bedroom to rent.

Tick the furniture you think might be in the room

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> shelves | <input type="checkbox"/> a wardrobe | <input type="checkbox"/> a lamp | <input type="checkbox"/> a bedside table |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a filing cabinet | <input type="checkbox"/> a bed | <input type="checkbox"/> a desk | <input type="checkbox"/> a mirror |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a sofa | <input type="checkbox"/> a towel rail | <input type="checkbox"/> a coffee table | <input type="checkbox"/> a rug |

Sara: Alan! Will you help me write this advertisement for the spare room?

Alan: Yes, we've got so much space. It would be great to get some money to help with the rent.

Sara: Now, we need to make it sound inviting.

Alan: Well, the room might be on the small side but the windows are very big so the natural light is really nice. Few rooms have such good natural light.

Sara: Yeah, it's a great room for working in during the day, and it's also got a great view of the garden.

Alan: Exactly. What shall we say about the furniture?

Sara: Well, it's not luxurious but it is very comfortable. The room has everything you need. Oh, except they will need to bring their own lamp; both of the lights in the ceiling are really old and not very bright.

Alan: That's true. But it has got a nice bed.

Sara: Yes, and it's got a great wardrobe, which has even got a few shelves for clothes as well. They will need to bring their own mirror if they want one, though.

Alan: Yes – there isn't one in the room at the moment. Now, there's no room for a bedside table but there is a good study desk in there.

Sara: Yes, I wouldn't mind a desk like that myself, actually. It's better than mine. It's got three drawers – mine hasn't got any at all.

Alan: Why don't you put it in your study then?

Sara: It's too big. There isn't much room in there.

Alan: I suppose not, because the desk has got shelves on top as well. They're really handy for putting books on. Now, what else?

Sara: What about the location? We could say it's close to transport. We're really lucky because we've got the bus and the train nearby.

Alan: That's true. And what shall we say about the rent? Shall we ask for £50 a week or is that too little?

Sara: Well, let's say it includes electricity and any other household bills and make it £60. Our expenses are bound to go up with an extra person in the house.

Alan: Yes, you're right, I hadn't thought of that! Now, pass me the newspaper.

Sara: I thought you'd already read the news today?

Alan: Yes, I have, but there are lots of advertisements for accommodation and I want to look at them before we finish ours.

1 Which three pieces of furniture are in the room?

A a bed

C a desk

F a mirror

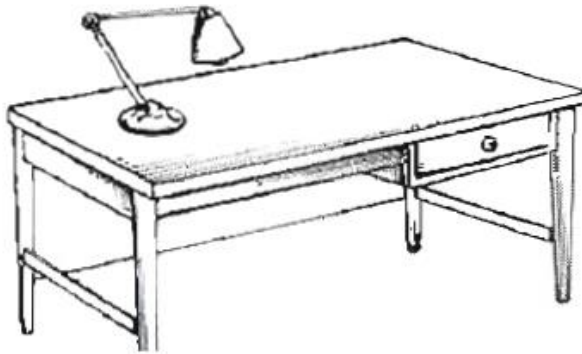
B a bedside table

E a lamp

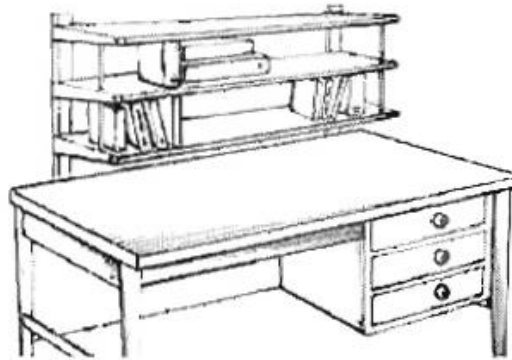
G a wardrobe

2 What does the desk look like?

A



B



C



1 A, C, G 2 B

Write no more than one word or a number for each answer.

Accommodation for rent

Small, furnished 1 available. Sunny with a nice view of the 2 Good location close to two types of 3 Rent 4 £..... per 5 Rent includes 6 and all other bills.

1 room 2 garden 3 transport 4 60 5 week
6 electricity

Look at the two groups of nouns in the table below. How are they different? Add the nouns from Exercises 2 and 3 into the table in the correct group.

Group 1	Group 2
<i>advertisement</i> <i>newspaper</i> <i>windows</i>	<i>money</i> <i>news</i> <i>accommodation</i>

Group 1 nouns are countable; group 2 nouns are uncountable.

Other countable nouns: bed, bedside table, bills, desk, garden, lamp, location, mirror, wardrobe, rent, room, types, view, week

Other uncountable nouns: furniture, transport, electricity

Countable nouns

- ◆ generally have a singular and plural form:
a window, lots of windows
▲ Some countable nouns only have a plural form: *clothes, trousers, jeans, scissors*
- ◆ take a singular or plural verb form:
The window is big. The windows are big.
- ◆ can be replaced by a singular or plural pronoun:
I'd like that desk; it's better than mine.
It's got shelves as well. They're really handy.
- ◆ can be measured with weights and measures: *two kilos of potatoes*
or numbers: *It's got three drawers.*
- ◆ can be used with *a/an*:
a desk, an apple

Uncountable nouns

- ◆ cannot be plural: *advice (not ~~advices~~), furniture (not ~~furnitures~~), data*
▲ Some uncountable nouns look plural but they are not: *news, economics, physics*
- ◆ take only a singular verb form:
The natural light is really nice.
- ◆ can be replaced by a singular pronoun:
'What shall we say about the furniture?'
'Well, it's not luxurious but it is very comfortable.'
- ◆ can be measured with weights and measures: *two kilos of sugar*
or with words like *a piece of, cup of, bit of, slice of*: *a piece of information*
- ◆ cannot be used with *a/an*:
information (not ~~an information~~)

Some

- ◆ is generally used in positive statements: *There are some shelves above the desk.*
 - ◆ can also be used in questions and particularly in requests and offers:
Would you like some biscuits?
 - ◆ means 'an unspecified (not large) amount':
It would be great to get some money to help with the rent. (we don't know how much money)
- ▲ We use *some of* with other determiners (e.g. *my, the, these*) to refer to a particular group:
Some of my students have part-time jobs.

Any

- ◆ is usually used in negatives and questions:

*My desk hasn't got **any** drawers.*

*Has your desk got **any** drawers?*

- ◆ can also be used in positive statements to mean 'it doesn't matter who/which/where/when':

*Call me **any** time if you need further help. (= it doesn't matter when you call)*

- ▲ We can also use **no** + noun to mean the same as *not ... any*:

*My desk has got **no** drawers. (= my desk hasn't got any drawers)*

We use **no** when the noun is a subject:

***No** applicants had the necessary experience for the job. (~~not Not any applicants~~)*

Words like *something/anything*, *somebody/anybody*, etc. follow the same rules as *some* and *any*.

3 Quantities

We can use the following words to say how many or how much:

	Plural countable nouns	Uncountable nouns
everything	<i>all (of)</i>	<i>all (of)</i>
large quantities	<i>lots of / plenty of / a lot of many (of) most (of) a large/considerable/substantial number of</i>	<i>lots of / plenty of / a lot of much (of) most (of) a large/considerable/substantial amount of</i>
medium quantities	<i>some (of)/a certain number of</i>	<i>some (of)/a certain amount of</i>
small quantities	<i>(a) few (of) a small/limited/tiny number of</i>	<i>(a) little (of) a small/limited/tiny amount of</i>
nothing	<i>no / not any / none of</i>	<i>no / not any / none of</i>

A few and *a little* are different from *few* and *little*. Compare:

Few rooms have such good natural light. (= not many, so you are lucky)

We have *a few* rooms available with a sea view. (= a small number)

Little research has been done in this area. (= not enough)

A little research has already been carried out in this area. (= a small amount)

▲ We use *a few of* with other determiners (e.g. *my, the, these*) to refer to a particular group:

A few of the rooms have a sea view.

Lots of / a lot of are less formal than much/many:

*There are **lots of advertisements** for accommodation in the paper.*

***Many scientists** believe that global warming is having a negative impact on our climate.*

⚠ We do not usually use *lots of* with negative statements:

*We don't have **a lot of/much** time so we'll have to be quick. (~~not we don't have lots of time~~)*

⚠ We do not usually use *much* in positive sentences:

*I found **a lot of** information on the Internet. (~~not much information~~)*

Grammar extra: Nouns that can be both countable and uncountable

Sometimes the same noun can be either countable or uncountable depending on the meaning (e.g. *light, room, cake, time*). Materials and liquids can also be either (e.g. *glass, paper, coffee, wine*). Compare:

The natural light is really nice. (uncountable)

Both of the lights in the ceiling are really old. (countable)

There isn't much room for a desk. (uncountable = space)

We have two spare rooms. (countable = rooms in a house)

Do you drink much coffee? (uncountable = in general)

I'd like to order a coffee, please. (countable = a cup of coffee)

Fill in the gaps with *amount*, *number*, *few*, *little*, *many* or *much*.

How much sleep do we need?

The 1 amount of sleep each person needs depends on 2 factors, including age. Infants generally require about 16 hours a day. For most adults, seven to eight hours a night appears to be the ideal 3 of sleep, although a 4 people may need as 5 as five hours' sleep or as 6 as ten hours' sleep each day. Getting too 7 sleep creates a sleep debt, and eventually, your body will demand that the debt be repaid.

A large 8 of people over 65 have frequent sleeping problems, such as insomnia, and deep sleep stages in 9 elderly people often become very short or stop completely. Microsleeps, or very brief episodes of sleep in an otherwise awake person, are another mark of sleep deprivation. In 10 cases, people are not aware that they are experiencing microsleeps. The widespread practice of burning the candle at both ends in western industrialized societies has created so 11 sleep deprivation that what is really abnormal sleepiness is now almost the norm.

2 many 3 amount 4 few 5 little (*sleep* is uncountable)/
few (*hours* are countable) 6 much/many 7 little
8 number 9 many 10 many 11 much (→ B3)

Test practice

Academic Reading

*You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1–14** which are based on the Reading Passage below.*

Reading

Questions 1-6: matching

Test tip: Underline or highlight each of the company names listed (1-6) in the passage. Then read the relevant information for each company carefully and match it to one of the ideas in the box.

Remember there will be more ideas in the box than you need and that the words in the box will not match the words in the passage exactly.

Key

- 1-D
- 2-G
- 3-C
- 4-A
- 5-B
- 6-F
- 7-Ingeo
- 8—soya bean
- 9-weaving
- 10-electronic components
- 11-battery
- 12-costumes
- 13-fragile
- 14-accessories/handbags