English A2 · Countable and uncountable nouns

Elementary English for Chinese speakers; classroom examples, not official exam items.

Fingers and soup

Countable things can be counted on your fingers; uncountable things are soup — you cannot count soup, you can only have more of it.

- a book, two books, many books — countable.
- some water, much money — uncountable: no a, no -s.

Two families, two toolkits

Tool	Countable	Uncountable
one	a book	× no a
a large amount	many books	a lot of water (much in questions)
a small amount	a few books	a little water
some / any	some books	some water
how question	How many books?	How much water?

Use the evidence

some and any serve both families.

Your turn: which family

Your turn

How ____ money do you have?

A. many
B. much
C. few
D. a few

The famous uncountables

Word	**The rule**	**Example**
homework	never homeworks	I have a lot of homework.
money	never moneys	How much money?
information / advice / news	no -s; news stays singular	some good advice; the news is sad
water / milk / bread / rice	drinks and **staples**	some bread, a little milk
music / **furniture**	mass nouns	some music, a lot of furniture

Your turn: the news

Your turn

The news ____ good today.

A. are
B. is
C. were
D. be

Measuring the soup

1. **The problem** You cannot count soup directly.
2. **The container** a bottle of water, a cup of tea, a piece of bread.
3. **The plural** two bottles of water, three pieces of advice.

Decision

The container takes the plural; the water stays soup.

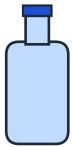
Your turn: the bread

Your turn

Which is correct?

A. a bread
B. some breads
C. a piece of bread
D. a rice

Count the container



a bottle of water



a cup of tea



a piece of bread



a bowl of soup

> Like a Chinese measure word

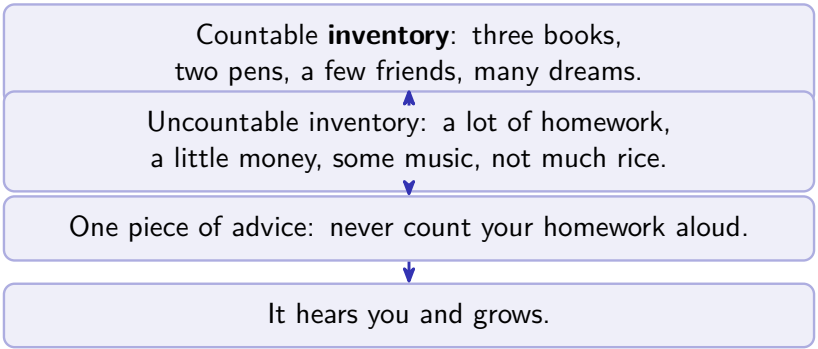
The -s temptation

Soups that look countable

homeworks · moneys · informations · advices — all impossible.

a lot of homework · a piece of information · some advice.

Say it aloud


Countable **inventory**: three books,
two pens, a few friends, many dreams.
Uncountable inventory: a lot of homework,
a little money, some music, not much rice.
One piece of advice: never count your homework aloud.
It hears you and grows.

Check yourself

- How much money do you have? — money is soup.
- some good advice — advice never grows an -s.
- a few friends — with the a, enough; without it, sad.
- two bottles of water — the container takes the plural.