



**Remember to watch the video first!** Then read the conversation between Sophie and Thierry, a student from France. Sophie's an expert on English grammar and is teaching Thierry about some difficult nouns.



**Grammar  
Snacks**

Some nouns in English are **countable** - we can use them in singular and plural forms; and some are **uncountable** - they only have one form.

We often use *a/an* with singular countable nouns and *some* with plurals. We can also use *some* with uncountable nouns.



**Thierry**

What are examples of countable nouns?

Here are a few:

*I've got **a** steak, **some** red chilli peppers, **some** potatoes...  
OK, well, I've got **a** lemon, **an** apple ...and **some** chicken breasts.  
I'd like **a** blue pen, please.*



**Sophie**



OK, so for things you can count, like one pen, two pens...Why did you say *a* pen, not *one* pen?

We often use *a/an* before singular countable nouns. Before words that start with a vowel sound, we use *an*, and before words that start with a consonant sound, we use *a*.



So is *one* wrong? As in *Would you like one drink?*

It sounds as if you're saying one (not two). If you're offering someone a drink you'd say, *Would you like a drink?*

But someone who works in a café might say, *So that's **one** coffee and **two** lemonades.*



So it's usually *a* or *an* for singular countable nouns and a number or *some* for plurals. How many is *some*?

It can be any number more than one.

*I got **some** new jeans at the weekend. (a pair of new jeans)*  
***Some** teachers left at the end of the year. (we don't know how many)*



Is *some* or a number always used with plurals?

No, have a look at these examples

*I'm frightened of **dogs**. (dogs in general)*  
*Strawberries have a lot of vitamin C. (strawberries in general)*



What about uncountable nouns?

These are nouns that don't have a plural form.

*I've got **some garlic** and **some butter**.*  
*I'm looking for **information** about early rock and roll.*  
*I haven't got enough **paper**.*  
*You have to get **permission** from the head teacher.*  
*Do you want **some cake**?*



So, I can use *some* with uncountables too?

Yes, we use *some* with both countables and uncountables.



How do I know whether a noun is countable or uncountable?

A dictionary will tell you. Usually dictionaries use symbols [C] for countable and [U] for uncountable.



Just a minute. You said cake was uncountable. What about, *I made a cake this morning*.

Yes that's correct, but there's a difference in meaning.

*I made **a cake** this morning. (a whole cake - countable)*  
*Do you want **some cake**? (a piece of cake - uncountable)*  
*A box of **chocolates**. (individual chocolates - countable)*  
*I'd like **some chocolate** too. (a piece or pieces of chocolate from a bar of chocolate - uncountable)*



I thought coffee and lemonade were uncountable too.

Yes, they are usually.

*I love **coffee** with hot milk. (uncountable)*  
*Can you get **some coffee**? (uncountable)*  
*I'll have **a coffee**, please. (a cup of coffee, countable)*



Wow, so it's more complicated than I thought.

No, they're not really very difficult.



OK, they're easy. It's *a piece of cake!*

Yes, simple! *A piece of cake!*

Watch the video here: <http://bit.ly/SjVKrJ>

