

In written expression questions on the TOEFL test, you should watch very carefully for key words, such as *each*, *every*, *a*, *one*, and *single*, that indicate that a noun should be singular. You should also watch carefully for such key words as *many*, *several*, *both*, *various*, and *two* (or any other number except *one*) that indicate that a noun should be plural.

The following chart lists the key words that indicate to you whether a noun should be singular or plural:

KEY WORDS FOR SINGULAR AND PLURAL NOUNS					
For Singular Nouns	<i>each</i>	<i>every</i>	<i>single</i>	<i>one</i>	<i>a</i>
For Plural Nouns	<i>both</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>many</i>	<i>several</i>	<i>various</i>

EXERCISE 39: Each of the following sentences contains at least one key word to tell you if a noun should be singular or plural. Circle the key words. Draw arrows to the nouns they describe. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. The automotive shop stocked many part for the various types of Hondas.
- C 2. Every receipt must be removed from the cashier's drawer and tallied.
- _____ 3. The salesclerk demonstrated various additional way that the machine could be used.
- _____ 4. The woman found it difficult to believe that both of the piece of jewelry had disappeared.
- _____ 5. The unhappy man became more and more discouraged with each passing days.
- _____ 6. An extended cruise would be a nice way to spend a vacation one days.
- _____ 7. The manager was surprised that not a single worker was available on Tuesday.
- _____ 8. The housekeeper cleaned the room and took two of the occupant's dress to the laundry.
- _____ 9. When the first bill was defeated, the Senate immediately began work on a different bills.
- _____ 10. There were several boxes in the cupboard, and each box contained a dozen glasses.

SKILL 40: DISTINGUISH COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

In English, nouns are classified as countable or uncountable. For certain questions on the TOEFL test, it is necessary to distinguish countable and uncountable nouns in order to use the correct modifiers with them.

As the name implies, countable nouns are nouns that can be counted. Countable nouns can come in quantities of one, or two, or a hundred, etc. The noun *book* is countable because you can have one book or several books.

Uncountable nouns, on the other hand, are nouns that cannot be counted because they come in some indeterminate quantity or mass. A noun such as *milk* or *happiness* cannot be counted; you cannot have one milk or two milks, and you cannot find one happiness or two happinesses. Uncountable nouns are often liquid items, such as *water*, *oil*, or *shampoo*. Uncountable nouns can also refer to abstract ideas, such as *security*, *excitement*, or *hope*.

It is important for you to recognize the difference between countable and uncountable nouns when you come across such key words as *much* and *many*.

He has seen *much** foreign *films*.

He didn't have *many** *fun* at the movies.

In the first example, *much* is incorrect because *films* is countable. This sentence should say *many foreign films*. In the second example, *many* is incorrect because *fun* is uncountable. This sentence should say *much fun*.

The following chart lists the key words that indicate to you whether a noun should be countable or uncountable:

KEY WORDS FOR COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS				
For Countable Nouns	<i>many</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>few</i>	<i>fewer</i>
For Uncountable Nouns	<i>much</i>	<i>amount</i>	<i>little</i>	<i>less</i>

EXERCISE 40: Each of the following sentences contains at least one key word to tell you if a noun should be countable or uncountable. Circle the key words. Draw arrows to the nouns they describe. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- C 1. He received (little) notice that the bill would have to be paid in full.
- I 2. The police had (few) opportunities to catch the thief who had committed a large (amount) of crimes.
- ___ 3. You will have fewer problems with your income taxes if you get professional help.
- ___ 4. After the strike, the company dismissed many employees.
- ___ 5. Because the bottom corner of the pocket was torn, much coins fell out.
- ___ 6. Since he bought the new adapter, he has had less trouble with the machine.
- ___ 7. There are much new items to purchase before leaving, and there is such a short amount of time.
- ___ 8. The less time you take on the assignment, the less pages you will complete.
- ___ 9. A few soldiers who had been in heavy combat were brought back for a little rest.
- ___ 10. It is better to go shopping in the late evening because there are less people in the market, and you can accomplish a number of tasks in a short period of time.