

Uncountables

– Uncount nouns or things not usually counted

(From the Collins Cobuild English Grammar, HarperCollins, 1993, ISBN 0 00 370257 X)

Some nouns refer to general things such as qualities, substances, processes, and topics rather than to individual items or events. These nouns have only one form, are not used with numbers, and are not usually used with the determinants, "the", "a" or "an".

E.g. Fermentation was carried out under various conditions

When using an uncountable noun as the subject of a verb, you must use the singular form of the verb.

E.g. The equipment was installed in a large hall.

A list of some common uncount nouns

advice (some)	knowledge
agreement	labour
agriculture	machinery
amplification	money
atmosphere	nature
behaviour (types of)	news
cancer*	optimization
collaboration	paper
cooperation	permission
comfort	pollution
cost	power
cultivation	progress
digestion	proof (a great deal of)
damage	rain
earth	research
education	sand (kinds of)
electricity	security
emission	sewage
energy	status
equipment	teaching
excretion	time (little)
experience	trade
evidence (a great deal of)	traffic
fermentation*	transport (modes of)
filtration	treatment (kinds of)
flexibility	waste*
finance	water*
food (foodstuffs)	work
fouling	
furniture	
growth	
health	
hydrolysis	
impact	
industry	
information (much)	
intelligence	
irradiation	
justice	

It is now becoming common for a number of uncountables to be used in the plural form, e.g. treatments. I seek to avoid this if possible.

Quantifying uncountable nouns

Uncountable nouns can be quantified using expressions such as: little, much, some, kinds of, types of etc., see above.

E.g. Different modes of treatment were investigated.

Uncountable nouns ending in "-s"

Such nouns often refer to subjects of study or activities.

acoustics	classics	logistics	politics
aerobics	economics	mathematics	statistics
aerodynamics	electronics	mechanics	thermodynamics
aeronautics	genetics	obstetrics	
athletics	linguistics	physics	

Some of these nouns are occasionally used as plural nouns, especially when talking about a person's work or activities:

E.g. His *politics* are clearly right-wing.