

Solutions to countable and uncountable problems discussion

Choose a problem below, ask your partner for advice, and react to what they say. The ones on the same line have the same meaning, so just choose one version.

Useful language for asking for advice

“What’s the best solution (do you think)?”

“What would you do (in that situation)?”

“Can you suggest anything?”

“Do you have any ideas?”

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations

Strong suggestions

“... had better... (or...)”

“... (really) must...”

“I strongly recommend...”

Weaker suggestions

“... should probably...”

“It’s worth thinking about...”

Weak suggestions

“... could (possibly)...”

“It might be worth thinking about...”

Useful language for responding to advice

Positive responses

“(That’s a) good idea/ great idea.”

Weak and negative responses

“That seems like a good idea.”

“That might work. It’s worth considering.”

“Actually, ... already. Do you have any other ideas?”

“I’m not sure that’d work (in this case) (because...) Can you suggest anything else?”

“Hmmm. Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

- a journalist is accusing your company of causing some polluted rivers/ a journalist is accusing your company of causing some water pollution
- a popular politician is proposing some laws that will make it much more difficult for your company to do business/ a popular politician is proposing some legislation that will make it much more difficult for your company to do business
- airlines that we usually use for business trips have started charging for all luggage/ airlines that we usually use for business trips have started charging for all suitcases etc
- applicants lack the right qualifications/ applicants lack the right training
- customer still want to pay in cash (rather than paying by card)/ customers still want to use notes and coins (rather than paying with a card)
- employees can’t complete all their duties within normal working time/ employees can’t complete all their work within normal working time
- engineers use too much jargon in their emails/ engineers use too many technical terms in their emails
- local politicians ask for a large number of bribes/ local politicians ask for a large amount of money
- new recruits don’t know how to use any of the necessary equipment/ new recruits don’t

- know how to use any of the necessary tools
 - new staff are too embarrassed to ask their colleagues for advice/ new staff are too embarrassed to ask their colleagues for suggestions
 - our marketing is ineffective/ our television ads are ineffective
 - staff can't afford housing near work/ staff can't afford apartments near work
 - staff complain about too much foreign business travel/ staff complain about too many journeys abroad
 - staff don't use all of their time off/ staff don't use all of their vacation days
 - staff work too many hours after 5 p.m./ staff do too much overtime/
 - the new CIO has little support among middle managers/ the new CIO has few supporters among middle managers
 - the number of blocked sites is increasing/ the amount of (government) censorship of the internet is increasing
 - the storeroom is full of lots of useless random stuff/ the storeroom is full of lots of useless random things
 - the unions are complaining about the amount of outsourcing/ the unions are complaining about the number of outsourced jobs
 - unions are threatening more industrial action/ unions are threatening more strikes
 - there are a considerable number of alcoholics in the office/ there is a considerable amount of alcoholism in the office
 - there are more and more systems problems every month/ there is more and more systems trouble every month
 - there are no buses to the office from the nearest station/ there is no public transport from the nearest station
 - there aren't enough books on running this kind of company/ there isn't enough literature on running this kind of company
 - there isn't enough (wheelchair) accessibility/ there aren't enough wheelchair ramps, etc
 - there isn't much information available on a company which is bidding to take over our company/ there aren't many figures available on a company which is bidding to take over our company
 - there will be fewer immigrants from next year due to tougher working visa restrictions/ there will be less immigration from next year due to tougher working visa restrictions
 - there will have to be some downsizing this winter/ there will have to be some redundancies this winter
 - top management wants fewer smokers in the company by the end of the year/ top management wants less smoking in the company by the end of the year
 - two women have complained about the sexist humour of their male colleagues/ two women have complained about the sexist jokes of their male colleagues
 - we don't know how many man hours will be needed to develop some new software/ we don't know how much time will be needed to develop some new software
 - we still need to send out quite a lot of letters, but the postal service is losing money and so is putting up prices every year/ we still need to send out quite a lot of (snail) mail, but the postal service is losing money and so is putting up prices every year
 - we want to get rid of some old office chairs, desks, etc but don't want to just throw them away/ we need to get rid of some old office furniture but don't want to just throw it away
 - young staff hate wearing business clothing/ young staff hate wearing suits
- Ask about any situations above you don't understand or can't imagine advice for.*

Without looking above, put “-s” (or “-ies” or “-es”) next to the one noun in each line below which can take it. Don’t make any other changes to the sentences.

- a journalist is accusing your company of causing some polluted river/ a journalist is accusing your company of causing some water pollution
- a popular politician is proposing some law that will make it much more difficult for your company to do business/ a popular politician is proposing some legislation that will make it much more difficult for your company to do business
- airlines that we usually use for business trips have started charging for all luggage/ airlines that we usually use for business trips have started charging for all suitcase etc
- applicants lack the right qualification/ applicants lack the right training
- customer still want to pay in cash (rather than paying by card)/ customers still want to use note and coins (rather than paying with a card)
- employees can’t complete all their duty within normal working time/ employees can’t complete all their work within normal working time
- engineers use too much jargon in their emails/ engineers use too many technical term in their emails
- local politicians ask for a large number of bribe/ local politicians ask for a large amount of money
- new recruits don’t know how to use any of the necessary equipment/ new recruits don’t know how to use any of the necessary tool
- new staff are too embarrassed to ask their colleagues for advice/ new staff are too embarrassed to ask their colleagues for suggestion
- our marketing is ineffective/ our television ad are ineffective
- staff can’t afford housing near work/ staff can’t afford apartment near work
- staff complain about too much foreign business travel/ staff complain about too many journey abroad
- staff don’t use all of their time off/ staff don’t use all of their vacation day
- staff work too many hour after 5 p.m./ staff do too much overtime
- the new CIO has little support among middle managers/ the new CIO has few supporter among middle managers
- the number of blocked site is increasing/ the amount of (government) censorship of the internet is increasing
- the storeroom is full of lots of useless random stuff/ the storeroom is full of lots of useless random thing
- the unions are complaining about the amount of outsourcing/ the unions are complaining about the number of outsourced job
- unions are threatening more industrial action/ unions are threatening more strike
- there are a considerable number of alcoholic in the office/ there is a considerable amount of alcoholism in the office
- there are more and more systems problem every month/ there is more and more systems trouble every month
- there are no bus to the office from the nearest station/ there is no public transport from the nearest station
- there aren’t enough book on running this kind of company/ there isn’t enough literature on running this kind of company
- there isn’t enough (wheelchair) accessibility/ there aren’t enough wheelchair ramp, etc

- there isn't much information available on a company which is bidding to take over our company/ there aren't many figure available on a company which is bidding to take over our company
- there will be fewer immigrant from next year due to tougher working visa restrictions/ there will be less immigration from next year due to tougher working visa restrictions
- there will have to be some downsizing this winter/ there will have to be some redundancy this winter
- top management wants fewer smoker in the company by the end of the year/ top management wants less smoking in the company by the end of the year
- two women have complained about the sexist humour of their male colleagues/ two women have complained about the sexist joke of their male colleagues
- we don't know how many man hour will be needed to develop some new software/ we don't know how much time will be needed to develop some new software
- we still need to send out quite a lot of letter, but the postal service is losing money and so is putting up prices every year/ we still need to send out quite a lot of (snail) mail, but the postal service is losing money and so is putting up prices every year
- we want to get rid of some old office chair, desks, etc but don't want to just throw them away/ we need to get rid of some old office furniture but don't want to just throw it away
- young staff hate wearing business clothing/ young staff hate wearing suit

Check your answers above.

When there are both general categories and specific examples, which one is usually uncountable? Find examples above.

Find examples above of words which have similar meanings but different grammar.

Words with countable and uncountable nouns presentation

Without looking above, list things which can go before countable and uncountable nouns in the table below. Some things can go with both.

With countable nouns	With uncountable nouns

Without looking above, put these words in those two columns.

- some
- any
- how many
- how much
- too many
- too much
- many
- much
- not many
- not much
- lots of/ a lot of/ loads of
- few
- little
- fewer
- less
- a (small/ considerable/ substantial/ large) number
- a/ an (small/ considerable/ substantial/ large) amount
- (not) enough
- more (and more)
- all
- no
- -s
- there are

Check your answers above, then do the same with these words which are not above.

- there is a
- there is (*with no a/ an*)
- every/ each
- a/ an/ one
- two

Work in groups of three or four. Each make one problem using a word from below and hold a meeting discussing problems to all those problems.

- pollution
- law
- luggage
- training
- cash
- duty
- jargon
- bribe
- equipment
- advice
- ad
- housing
- travel
- vacation day
- overtime
- support
- site
- random stuff
- outsourcing
- strike
- trouble
- transport
- book
- accessibility
- figure
- immigrant
- smoking
- humour
- man hour
- snail mail
- furniture
- clothing

Try to remember if the words above are countable or uncountable, and then think of another related word which has the opposite grammar.