

ABOUT Grammar

Basic Reference Book

Author
Dr Wee Bee Geok
MOE Consultant
Dr Lubna Alsagoff

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Unit 1

Nouns



What's in this unit?

- A.** Common nouns and proper nouns p 3
- B.** Countable nouns and uncountable nouns p 6
- C.** Singular nouns and plural nouns p 7
- D.** Masculine nouns and feminine nouns p 14
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Nouns are words that tell us about people, things and places. We can group nouns into different types.

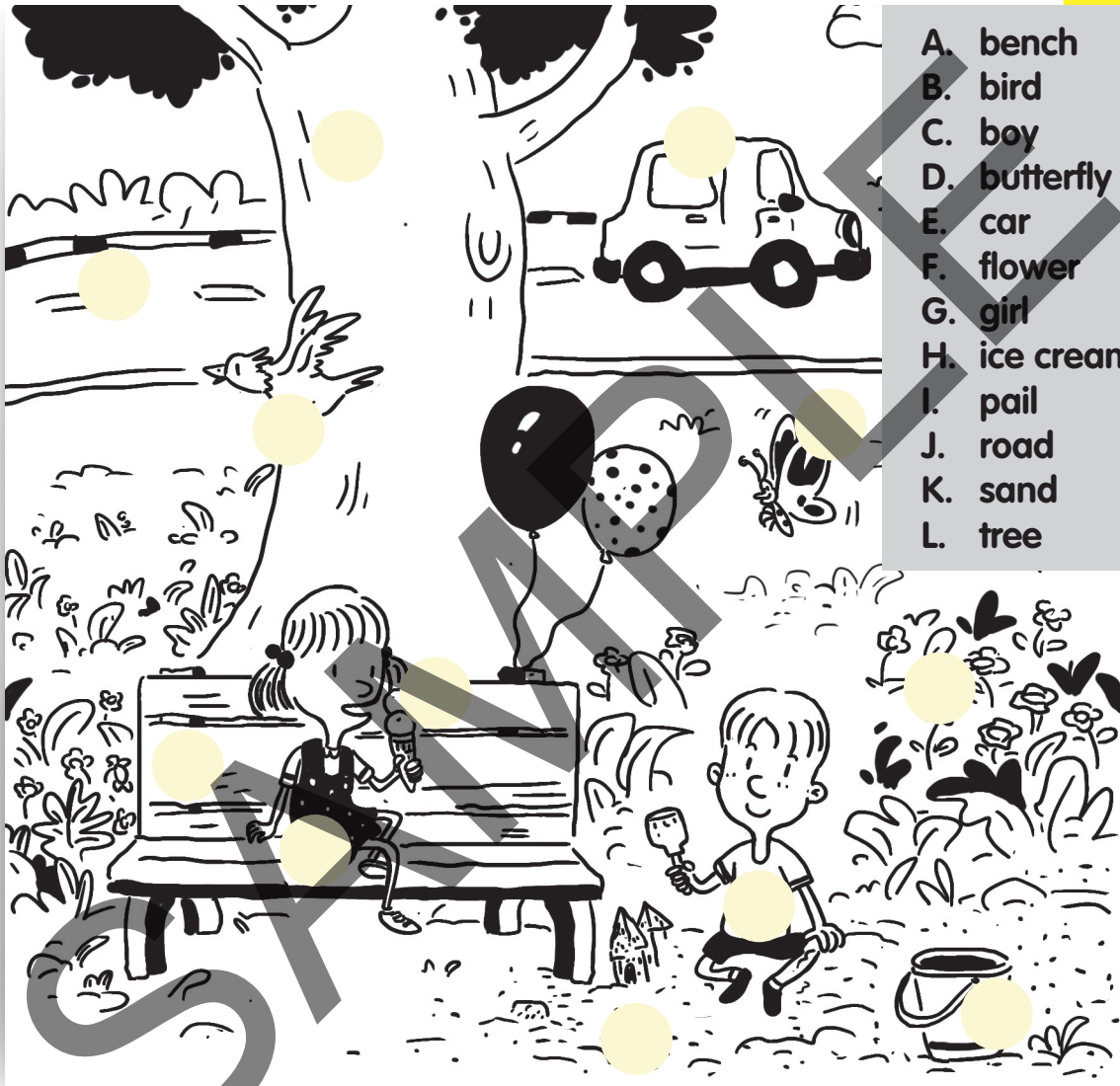
- ✓ common nouns
- ✓ proper nouns
- ✓ countable nouns
- ✓ uncountable nouns
- ✓ concrete nouns
- ✓ abstract nouns

Nouns can change their forms. For example, nouns can be either singular or plural, masculine or feminine.

Nouns can also be used with other words to form noun phrases.

A. Common nouns and proper nouns

Fill in the circles in the picture. Choose the correct letters from the list of nouns in the box.



- A. bench
- B. bird
- C. boy
- D. butterfly
- E. car
- F. flower
- G. girl
- H. ice cream
- I. pail
- J. road
- K. sand
- L. tree

1 The words in the grey box are examples of common nouns.
Common nouns name people, things and places.

Grammar plus

Ice cream is a **compound noun**. It is a noun made up of two words. Sometimes, the two words are written as one word, e.g. *postman* and *toothbrush*.

Grammar buzz

Proper nouns always begin with capital letters. We will learn more about this in Unit 11 on page 166.



2 Proper nouns are words we use:

to name specific people

Mr Sim, who is that?



That girl is Emma. She is our new neighbour.

Did you know...



People have different types of names depending on where they are from. People from countries such as the USA, UK and Australia have their family names or surnames at the end of their names, after their first names.



George Washington

Many Asian names have surnames at the beginning, followed by the first names. Chinese first names often consist of two words.



Tan Swee Lee

▶ **Mr Sim**

▶ **Emma**

proper nouns

▶ **girl**

▶ **neighbour**

common nouns

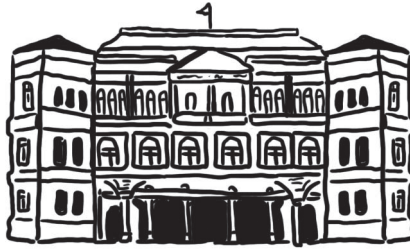
to name countries and their people

Country	People
Singapore	Singaporeans
Egypt	Egyptians
Germany	Germans
Greece	Greeks
Korea	Koreans
Thailand	Thais

to name places



▶ *Eiffel Tower*



▶ *Raffles Hotel*

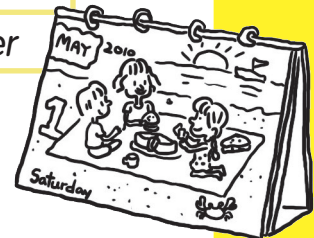
Did you know...

Many streets and landmarks in Singapore are named after famous people in the history of Singapore.



to name days of the week or months of the year

Day of the week	Month of the year	
<i>Monday</i>	<i>January</i>	<i>July</i>
<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>August</i>
<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>March</i>	<i>September</i>
<i>Thursday</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>October</i>
<i>Friday</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>November</i>
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>December</i>
<i>Sunday</i>		



to name special events or festivals

▶ **National Day**

▶ **Sports Day**

▶ **Mid-Autumn Festival**

B. Countable nouns and uncountable nouns

Which of the nouns can we count? Put a tick in the correct circles. An example has been done for you.

	Countable	Uncountable
1. bench	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. bird	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. butterfly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. girl	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. pail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. sand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. tree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 We use **countable nouns** to name things that can be counted. Countable nouns are also called **count nouns**.

Countable nouns can be singular or plural.

When we have only one thing, we use **singular nouns**.

- ▶ one **book**
- ▶ one **apple**
- ▶ a **book**
- ▶ an **apple**

When we have two or more things, we use **plural nouns**.

- ▶ two **books**
- ▶ ten **books**
- ▶ a few **books**
- ▶ many **books**



2 **Uncountable nouns** name things that cannot be counted. Uncountable nouns are also called **non-count nouns** or **mass nouns**.

Uncountable nouns such as *water* and *oil* do not have plural forms.

- ▶ *a little water* ✓
- ▶ *two waters* ✗
- ▶ *a few water* ✗
- ▶ *a few waters* ✗
- ▶ *much water* ✓
- ▶ *many water* ✗
- ▶ *many waters* ✗

C Singular nouns and plural nouns



▶ one **cat**

singular noun



▶ five **cats**

plural noun

1 To change a countable noun from singular to plural, we usually add **-s** to the end of the word.

Singular	Rule	Plural
book	+ -s	books
cat		cats
cup		cups
hat		hats

- 2 When a countable noun ends with **s**, **sh**, **x**, **o** or **ch**, we add **-es** to the end of the word.

Singular	Rule	Plural
<i>bus</i>	+ -es	<i>buses</i>
<i>dish</i>		<i>dishes</i>
<i>tax</i>		<i>taxes</i>
<i>tomato</i>		<i>tomatoes</i>
<i>watch</i>		<i>watches</i>

- 3 When the noun ends with **y**, we change **y** to **i**, and add **-es** to the end of the word.

Singular	Rule	Plural
<i>city</i>	y → i + -es	<i>cities</i>
<i>story</i>		<i>stories</i>

- 4 When the noun ends with **f** or **fe**, we change **f** or **fe** to **v**, and add **-es** to the end of the word.

Singular	Rule	Plural
<i>leaf</i>	f → v + -es	<i>leaves</i>
<i>wife</i>	fe → v + -es	<i>wives</i>

Some countable nouns that end with **f** or **fe** do not follow the above rule.

Singular	Rule	Plural
<i>roof</i>	+ -s	<i>roofs</i>
<i>safe</i>		<i>safes</i>

5 Some countable nouns have two plural forms.

Singular	Rule	Plural
dwarf	+ -s	dwarfs
dwarf	f → v + -es	dwarves

Activity 1

Fill in each space with either the correct spelling rule or the correct plural noun. An example has been done for you.



	Singular	Rule	Plural
1.	apple	+ -s	apples
2.	river		rivers
3.	teacher	+ -s	
4.	glass	+ -es	
5.	bus		buses
6.	box		boxes
7.	match	+ -es	
8.	hero		heroes
9.	lorry	y → i + -es	
10.	puppy		puppies
11.	scarf	f → v + -es	
12.	knife		knives

- 6 There are nouns that do not follow any of the spelling rules that we have learnt so far. They are called **irregular nouns**.

Singular	Plural ✓	Plural ✗
child	children ✓	childs ✗
mouse	mice ✓	mouses ✗
tooth	teeth ✓	tooths ✗

Some nouns have plurals that look like they are singular.

Singular	Plural ✓	Plural ✗
deer	deer ✓	deers ✗
sheep	sheep ✓	sheeps ✗
spacecraft	spacecraft ✓	spacecrafts ✗

- I saw **a sheep** but my father saw **three sheep**.

- 7 Nouns that name things with two parts are always plural, e.g. *binoculars, goggles, scissors, spectacles and trousers*.

- The *scissors* are not sharp! ✓
 ► The *scissor* is not sharp! ✗
 ► The *scissors* is not sharp. ✗



Grammar buzz

Plural nouns take the plural verb *are*. We will learn more about this in Unit 5 on page 94.



- Your *trousers* are too long. ✓
 ► Your *trouser* is too long. ✗
 ► Your *trousers* is too long. ✗



Activity 2

Look at the nouns that have been circled below. Use a light colour to shade the singular nouns, and a dark colour to shade the plural nouns.



The moon



The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,
On streets and fields and harbour quays,
And birds asleep in the forks of the trees.



The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,
The howling dog by the door of the house,
The bat that lies in bed at noon,
All love to be out by the light of the moon.



But all of the things that belong to the day
Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;
And flowers and children close their eyes
Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.



Adapted from 'The Moon' by Robert Louis Stevenson



Grammar buzz

Singular nouns take the singular verb *is*. We will learn more about this in Unit 5 on page 93.

8 Some nouns look like they end with the plural word ending **-s**, but they are actually **uncountable nouns**. They can only be used with singular verbs. We cannot remove the **-s** at the end of these words.

- ▶ *athletics* ▶ *mathematics* ▶ *news*
- ▶ *billiards* ▶ *measles* ▶ *physics*

- ▶ *The news **is** very sad.* ✓
- ▶ *The news **are** very sad.* ✗
- ▶ *The **new** is very sad.* ✗
- ▶ *Mathematics **is** an interesting subject.* ✓
- ▶ *Mathematics **are** an interesting subject.* ✗
- ▶ *Mathematic **is** an interesting subject.* ✗



Activity 3

Fill in the spaces with the correct type of nouns.

- air bus house mice pond
- actress children love piano shirts
- boxes fingers medicine petrol smoke

Singular countable		Plural countable		Uncountable	
1.		6.		11.	
2.		7.		12.	
3.		8.		13.	
4.		9.		14.	
5.		10.		15.	

9 Milk, water and rice are examples of uncountable nouns. Uncountable nouns do not have plural forms.

✦ We can 'count' uncountable nouns by adding countable nouns together with **of**.



- ▶ one cup **of** milk
- ▶ one bowl **of** water
- ▶ one bag **of** rice
- ▶ three cups **of** milk
- ▶ three bowls **of** water
- ▶ three bags **of** rice

✦ Even though words such as *furniture* and *luggage* seem like they can be counted, they are actually uncountable nouns.

- ▶ She has beautiful *furniture* in her home. ✓
- ▶ She has beautiful pieces **of** *furniture* in her home. ✓
- ▶ She has beautiful ~~*furnitures*~~ in her home. ✗
- ▶ The *luggage* belongs to my aunt. ✓
- ▶ The two pieces **of** *luggage* belong to my aunt. ✓
- ▶ The ~~*luggages*~~ belong to my aunt. ✗



Q: Look at the words in **bold**. What is strange about them?

Waiter: Good morning. Can I help you, sir?

Customer: Good morning. I would like to have four burgers, two **coffees** and three **Pepsis**.

A: *Coffee* is an uncountable noun, so it should not have a plural form. *Pepsi*® is a proper noun. Proper nouns are uncountable.

However, when we are being informal, with friends or family, we can say *two coffees* or *three Pepsis*.

When we are speaking or writing formally, e.g. in school, we should say *two cups of coffee* or *three cans of Pepsi*®.

D. Masculine nouns and feminine nouns

- 1 We can use nouns such as *people*, *doctor*, *dancer*, *lawyer* and *teacher* to name both men and women.

Some nouns, however, have different ways of naming male and female. For example, *man* is the **masculine noun**, and *woman* is the **feminine noun**.

When nouns have different words for male and female, we say that they have **gender**.



Activity 4

Fill in the spaces with the correct masculine and feminine nouns.

aunt daughter hero king nephew
 bride grandmother husband lady princess

	Masculine	Feminine
1.	son	
2.		queen
3.	grandfather	
4.	uncle	
5.	prince	
6.		niece
7.		wife
8.	bridegroom	
9.		heroine
10.	lord	

- 2 Sometimes, the feminine nouns are formed from the masculine nouns.

Masculine	Feminine
<i>actor</i>	<i>actress</i>
<i>emperor</i>	<i>empress</i>
<i>prince</i>	<i>princess</i>
<i>waiter</i>	<i>waitress</i>

- 3 Some animals also have different names for the male and female.

Masculine	Feminine
<i>bull</i>	<i>cow</i>
<i>fox</i>	<i>vixen</i>
<i>gander</i>	<i>goose</i>
<i>lion</i>	<i>lioness</i>
<i>rooster</i>	<i>hen</i>
<i>stallion</i>	<i>mare</i>
<i>tiger</i>	<i>tigress</i>

- 4 Nouns that refer to non-living things have no gender. These nouns are sometimes called **neuter nouns**.

- ▶ *book*
- ▶ *computer*
- ▶ *cup*
- ▶ *flower*
- ▶ *key*
- ▶ *pen*

Grammar plus



The noun, *parent*, can mean both male and female. To describe a female parent, we use the noun, *mother*. To describe the male parent, we use the noun, *father*.



Activity 5

After each word, write **M** in the circle if it is a masculine noun, **F** if it is feminine or **N** if it is neuter. If it is none of these, write **NA**.

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. brother | <input type="radio"/> | 6. lady | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. niece | <input type="radio"/> | 7. doctor | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. emperor | <input type="radio"/> | 8. policewoman | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. friend | <input type="radio"/> | 9. scientist | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. hat | <input type="radio"/> | 10. train | <input type="radio"/> |

E. Collective nouns

1. **Collective nouns** group people, animals or things.

- ▶ A **troop** of eighty soldiers marched up the hill.
- ▶ The **pride** of lions ambushed their prey together.
- ▶ I gave my mother a **bouquet** of flowers on Mother's Day.
- ▶ I only saw two **piles** of books on the table.

2. We usually use collective nouns in a fixed pattern.

a/an	collective noun	of	plural noun
a	pack	of	wolves
an	army	of	ants

We can also use words such as *two* or *many*. If we do, the collective noun must be plural.

Activity 6

Fill in the blanks with the correct collective nouns from the box. Use each collective noun only ONCE. An example has been done for you.



band	company	flock	herd	string
bouquet	constellation	gaggle	pack	swarm
bundle	fleet	heap	school	troop

1. a herd of cows
2. a _____ of flowers
3. a _____ of cards
4. a _____ of bees
5. a _____ of sheep
6. a _____ of sticks
7. a _____ of musicians
8. a _____ of monkeys
9. a _____ of ships
10. a _____ of stones
11. a _____ of geese
12. a _____ of pearls
13. a _____ of fish
14. a _____ of stars
15. a _____ of actors

F. Concrete nouns and abstract nouns

1 Words such as *garden*, *swing*, *shoes*, *water* and *bowl* are called **concrete nouns**. Concrete nouns name things that we can see, touch, smell or taste.

2 Things that we cannot see, touch, smell or taste, such as *happiness*, *love*, *peace*, *excitement* and *honesty*, are called **abstract nouns**. They usually describe feelings, thoughts or ideas.

3 We can often tell that words are abstract nouns from their **word endings**, e.g. *collection*, *excellence* and *membership*.

These word endings or **suffixes** can change concrete nouns into abstract nouns.

- ▶ *brother* → *brotherhood*
- ▶ *friend* → *friendship*
- ▶ *king* → *kingdom*

Sometimes, the suffixes change adjectives into abstract nouns.

- ▶ *honest* → *honesty*
- ▶ *patient* → *patience*
- ▶ *sad* → *sadness*

They can also change verbs into abstract nouns.

- ▶ *excite* → *excitement*
- ▶ *explore* → *exploration*
- ▶ *fail* → *failure*

Grammar buzz

Adjectives are words that tell us about the noun, such as how it looks like, how big it is, or how old it is. We will learn more about adjectives in Unit 4.

Verbs are 'doing' words. They describe actions or how things are. We will learn about verbs in Unit 5.



Activity 7

Fill in the blanks with the abstract nouns of the words in **bold**.



1. Mr Lee was filled with _____. He was **angry** because someone had scratched his car.
2. The tired hikers were so **thirsty**. They thought they would soon die of _____.
3. He was very **brave**. He saved an old woman from a fire. He was given a commendation award for his _____.
4. There was a lot of _____. Everyone was terrified and **confused**.
5. Ms Ying was very pleased with the day's _____ as every pupil **attended** the remedial lesson.
6. She sometimes behaves in a **silly** way. Everyone laughs at her _____.
7. We **celebrated** Gina's birthday. Everyone took part in the _____.
8. Her face turned red with _____. Her friends had **embarrassed** her when they told Billy that she loved him.
9. Taufik is an **honest** boy. His teachers always praise him for his _____.
10. Scientists have started **exploring** Earth's deep oceans. Their _____ show that strange animals can live in places where there is no food or light.

G. Possessive forms of nouns

1 To show ownership, we change nouns into their **possessive forms**. We use a punctuation mark called the apostrophe (') together with an **-s**.

Grammar buzz

We will learn more about the apostrophe in Unit 11 on page 170.



▶ *Nina's dolls* means *Nina owns the dolls.*

☞ When we change singular nouns into their possessive forms, we add **-s** to the end of the nouns.

- ▶ *Betty's bag*
- ▶ *that baby's pram*

☞ When we change plural nouns that end in **-s** into their possessive forms, we add (') to the end of the nouns.

- ▶ *the boys' shoes*
- ▶ *the babies' toys*

☞ With irregular plural nouns which do not end in **-s**, we add **-'s**.

- ▶ *the children's clothes*
- ▶ *these deer's horns*



Activity 8

Fill in the spaces with the correct possessive forms of the nouns. An example has been done for you.

1.	the bag belonging to Jan	Jan's bag
2.	the games belonging to the boys	
3.	the glasses belonging to Mrs Tan	
4.	the pen belonging to the teacher	
5.	the whistle belonging to the referee	
6.	the caps belonging to the policemen	

H. Nouns which look like verbs

1 Words that end in **-ing** are usually verbs.
Verbs are words that name actions.

- ▶ *I am **reading**.*
- ▶ *He is **eating**.*

2 There are some nouns that also end with **-ing**.
They are called **gerunds**. Gerunds name activities.

- ▶ *My sister likes **reading**.*
- ▶ ***Smoking** is bad for your health.*

3 Many names of sports are examples of gerunds.

- ▶ *Remy likes **bowling**.*
- ▶ ***Fencing** is becoming popular in Singapore.*

Grammar buzz

We will learn more about verbs in Unit 5.



Noun phrases

- 1 We do not usually use nouns by themselves in sentences. We use nouns together with other words. These other words tell us more about the nouns, and help form a **noun phrase**. The noun is the most important word – it is the **head** of the phrase.

Noun phrase		
<i>a</i>	<i>young</i>	boy
<i>the</i>	<i>happy</i>	girl
<i>two</i>	<i>dirty</i>	pails
<i>much</i>	<i>clean</i>	water
<i>this</i>	<i>small</i>	house
<i>some</i>	<i>beautiful</i>	flowers
determiner	adjective	noun

- 2 There are two types of words we can use with nouns.

- ✦ **Determiners:** These are words such as articles, e.g. *a* and *the*. They can also be pointing words such as *this*, *that* and *these*, or words that tell us 'how many' or 'how much' such as *two*, *some*, *many* and *much*.
- ✦ **Adjectives:** These words tell us more about the noun, e.g. *beautiful*, *small* and *young*.

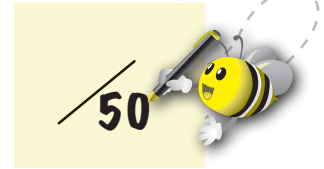
Grammar buzz

We will learn more about determiners in Unit 2, and about adjectives in Unit 4.



Test yourself

Section A (20 marks)



Are these sentences right or wrong? For each sentence, put a tick in the box if it is right and a cross if it is wrong. For sentences that are wrong, rewrite them as correct sentences.

1. Have you been to the national museum?

2. Tomorrow is national day.

3. The two peaches are very sweet.

4. I like to eat rices in a bowl.

5. The three ladys are from the community centre.

6. Many sheeps are grazing in the field.

7. Three mouses have been caught in the trap.

8. We bought two tubs of ice cream for our guests.

9. Please add salts to the chicken.

10. The childs' crayons are in a beautiful box.

Section B (15 marks)

Underline all the nouns in the sentences.

1. Andy has a hamster, a dog and two rabbits.
2. The dog is called Waggy.
3. Waggy likes to sit in the sun after a bath.
4. Waggy also likes to play with a ball.
5. The rabbits have pink eyes and pink ears.
6. The rabbits love to nibble the grass in the garden.
7. Carrots and apples are their favourite food.
8. The hamster looks like a mouse with no tail.
9. The hamster lives in a cage and eats food from a bowl.
10. Andy cleans the cage every Sunday.

Section C

(15 marks)

Look at the instructions for making fizzy lemonade. Circle the uncountable nouns and underline the countable nouns. An example has been done for you.

How to make a jug of fizzy lemonade

1. Stir two tablespoons of sugar in one cup of water to make some syrup.
2. Cut and squeeze juice from two lemons.
3. Pour the syrup into the jug.
4. Add some fizzy water.
5. Mix well.
6. Put some cubes of ice in the jug.
7. Serve it in a glass with a yellow straw.

