

# Editing for Noun Errors

This resource will help you identify and correct noun errors.

When editing for grammar errors, look specifically at the nouns in a piece of writing. Fixing noun errors often leads naturally to fixing other errors (such as article errors and subject/verb agreement errors).

Identify the nouns in each of your sentences. Use the following questions for each noun:

## 1. Is the noun plural or singular?

If a noun should be plural, make sure it has a plural form:

- “s” at the end of the word for most nouns
- irregular plural forms for nouns such as “*people*,” “*children*,” “*feet*,” “*women*.”

## 2. Is the noun countable or uncountable?

Two kinds of uncountable nouns often cause errors:

- Group or category words in English are often not countable  
*equipment*    *grammar*    *research*    *vocabulary*    *garbage*    *advice*
- Abstract words in English are uncountable in some situations but countable in other situations (such as *culture*, *society*, and *experience*). Often, it is safe to treat these nouns as uncountable.

If you are unsure, look up the word in an English learners’ dictionary to see when to use the word in a countable way and in an uncountable way.

## 3. Do all singular nouns have an article (or other determiner)?

If a noun is singular, it must have a determiner. The only exception is for most names or proper nouns. Determiners can be classified as *specifiers* or *quantifiers*:

- Specifiers: “th” words: *the*, *this*, *that* and possessive specifiers: *my*, *your*, *her*, *his*, *Mary’s*, etc.
- Quantifiers: *a/an*, *one*, *any*, *each*, *every*, *either*, *neither*, *no*, etc.

Useful Advice: Because plural or uncountable nouns often do not need articles or determiners, you’ll make fewer article errors if you use plural nouns whenever possible.

## 4. Do singular and uncountable subjects agree with their verb?

When a singular or an uncountable noun is the subject of a verb in the present tense, the verb must end with an “s”.

*The cafeteria provides many food choices.*

*Rain provides much needed water for thirsty plants.*

This subject/verb agreement error occurs mostly for present tense verbs, but because the present tense is used to describe, explain, and to talk about facts, concepts, or principles, subject/verb agreement errors occur frequently in academic writing. Verb agreement errors do not happen in other tenses except for the past tense of “be” verbs (*was*, *were*).