

Nouns which are both countable and uncountable

The pairs of sentences below use the same noun with the first example being the uncountable version and the second being the countable version. Both are grammatically correct but one of the two sentences is unusual or even strange. Which is more common in each pair?

Get some glass out for dinner/ Get some glasses out for dinner

He visited lots of capital in Europe/ He visited lots of capitals in Europe

I bought some wood/ I bought some woods

I can't stand the bad language on TV/ I can't stand the bad languages on TV

I did lots of revision before my test/ I did lots of revisions before my test

I got some interest from the bank/ I got some interests from the bank

I like to have some fire in my house/ I like to have a fire in my house

I walked so far I had to put some plaster on my feet/ I walked so far I had to put some plasters on my feet

I watched some drama last weekend/ I watched some dramas last weekend

I wrote my experience on my CV/ I wrote my experiences on my CV

Some light came through the window/ Some lights came through the window

Some life was lost/ Some lives were lost

The teacher made me do some exercise for homework/ The teacher made me do some exercises for homework

Watch some television/ Watch some televisions

We bought 200 tonnes of iron/ We bought 200 tonnes of irons

We used some really nice cloth to make his suit/ We used some really nice cloths to make his suit

I watched some film yesterday/ I watched some films yesterday

We don't have enough room for all those teddy bears/ We don't have enough rooms for all those teddy bears

What would the less common one in each pair?

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Suggested answers

- Get some glasses out for dinner. “Get some glass out for dinner” would mean some of that material, e.g. a broken window, on the dinner table.
- He visited lots of capitals in Europe. “He visited lots of capital in Europe” would mean looking at money.
- I bought some wood. “I bought some woods” would mean buying entire forests.
- I can’t stand the bad language on TV. “I can’t stand the bad languages on TV” would mean I dislike particular foreign languages.
- I did lots of revision before my test. “I did lots of revisions before my test” would mean making lots of changes to my written work.
- I got some interest from the bank. “I got some interests from the bank” would mean I got my hobbies from them.
- I like to have a fire in my house. “I like to have some fire in my house” would make me a pyromaniac.
- I walked so far I had to put some plasters on my feet. “I walked so far I had to put some plaster on my feet” would mean I was fixing my own broken bones.
- I watched some dramas last weekend. “I watched some drama last weekend” would mean real life events, e.g. my parents arguing.
- I wrote my experience on my CV. “I wrote my experiences on my CV” would mean interesting stories of things that happened to me.
- Some light came through the window. “Some lights came through the window” would mean people throwing lamps into my house.
- “Some lives were lost”. Some life was lost would mean I would die earlier because of it (though still in the future) or that it became less lively.
- The teacher made me do some exercises for homework. “The teacher made me do some exercise for homework” would mean some physical exercise, e.g. jogging.
- Watch some television. “Watch some televisions” would mean several TV sets at the same time.
- We bought 200 tonnes of iron. “We bought 200 tonnes of irons” would mean the things for making your clothes flat.
- We used some really nice cloth to make his suit. “We used some really nice cloths to make his suit” would mean rags.
- I watched some films yesterday. “I watched some film yesterday” would mean sitting looking at a roll of film out of a camera.
- We don’t have enough room for all those teddy bears. “We don’t have enough rooms for all those teddy bears” would mean each teddy bear has its own bedroom.