

NOUNS

uncountable nouns ending in -s; collective nouns

uncountable nouns ending in -s

Some nouns end in -s but are uncountable and take a singular verb:

Physics is difficult.

Maths is a compulsory subject.

- Other examples include:

<i>economics</i>	<i>aerobics</i>	<i>athletics</i>
<i>classics</i>	<i>economics</i>	<i>genetics</i>
<i>linguistics</i>	<i>mathematics</i>	<i>measles</i>
<i>mumps</i>	<i>physics</i>	

~~X Mathematics are my favourite subject.~~

✓ Mathematics **is** my favourite subject.

~~X He wears a glasses which make him look intelligent.~~

✓ He wears **glasses** which make him look intelligent.

- Some uncountable nouns ending in -s also have a plural meaning:

Politics is a dirty business. (= in general)

His politics are right wing. (= specific)

nouns that are always plural

Some nouns are always plural and take a plural verb. We normally use *the* with them:

The talks are going ahead between the Government and the unions.

~~X The authority had refused them their civil rights.~~

✓ The **authorities** had refused them their civil rights.

- Sometimes the noun has only a plural form:
His clothes are dirty but he is actually well off.
I believe congratulations are in order!

Below are some common plural nouns. (We use *the* with many of them. See the examples.)

plural noun	meaning / use	example
authorities	people in charge	<i>The British authorities are investigating the problem.</i>
conditions	the physical situation	<i>Conditions in the prison are very poor.</i>
contents	the things inside	<i>He emptied the contents of his pocket.</i>
foundations	material under a building to support it	<i>The foundations of the building were laid ten years ago.</i>
outskirts	parts of the city furthest from the centre	<i>The outskirts of the city are a very nice place to have a house.</i>
premises	building or part of building that a shop uses	<i>The premises are in a new office block.</i>
races	an occasion when horses race	<i>They went for a day out at the races.</i>
resources	available money, equipment, skills, etc.	<i>We do not have the resources to deal with the problem.</i>
sights	places of interest in an area	<i>Let's go and see the sights.</i>
stairs	steps inside a house	<i>The stairs are made of wood.</i>

- We often use *my*, *her*, *his*, etc., with these plural nouns:

plural noun	example
activities	Are you aware of our activities ?
feelings	You've hurt her feelings .
headquarters	Their headquarters are in New York.
likes and dislikes	We discussed our likes and dislikes .
movements	The police traced his movements .
terms	These are our terms for ending the strike.
travels	His travels have provided good material for a book.

We often use some plural nouns without an article or determiner:

plural noun	example
appearances	Appearances can be deceptive.
congratulations	Congratulations on your wedding.
lodgings	He rented lodgings near the college.
refreshments	Refreshments will be served in the interval.
troops	Troops were sent in to restore order.
supplies	They ran out of supplies .

- We can use some words either with *the* or with no article:
The goods in the airport lounge are sold duty-free.
Goods must be paid for before leaving.
The expenses for her trip were paid by the firm.
Imagine the trip – no work and all expenses paid!

Clothes and tools

Many clothes, tools and equipment are designed with two parts joined together. We use them as plurals with -s and a plural verb:

*His **glasses** are new.*
*Bring me the **pliers** which **are** on the table.*
*The **scissors** are in the drawer.*
*She was wearing **shorts** which **were** too big for her.*
*My **trousers** are dirty.*

- Other examples include:

binoculars	braces	compasses
dungarees	handcuffs	jeans
overalls	pants	pyjamas
scales	sunglasses	tights
spectacles	trunks	underpants

- To refer to a single item we say:
a pair of scissors a pair of glasses
a pair of jeans a pair of tights
- When we use the expression *a pair of* with a plural noun, the verb that follows is singular if it is in the same clause and plural if it is in a relative clause:
*This pair of jeans **is** new.*
*I bought a pair of jeans which **were** much cheaper.*

collective nouns

Collective nouns refer to a group of people or things, e.g. *army*, *committee*, *team*. We can think of them as either a single unit or as members of a group:

collective noun + singular verb (a single unit)	The team is the best in the country. The council is building a new road.
collective noun + plural verb (members of the group)	The team are confident of victory. The council are voting on the issue.

- Here is a list of common collective nouns:

army	audience	the BBC
community	class	committee
crew	data	the European Union
family	government	group
gang	jury	media
herd	press	public
staff	team	the United Nations

- These words take only a plural verb:
***Cattle** are kept for their meat.*
***The people** are very pleased.*
***The police** have been called in.*

Practice

Fill in each space with an appropriate word from the box.

pair of shorts foundations scissors jury expenses media
company interests troops army supplies

- 1 You're very lucky – travelling around the world, staying in nice hotels, all paid.
- 2 The mass nowadays, TV and the press, have enormous power.
- 3 In the summer, you can't go around wearing long trousers all the time. You'll need a nice
- 4 Can you pass me those so I can cut this article out of the paper?
- 5 The have weighed all the evidence and have found the accused guilty.
- 6 She lives alone and just needs now and again, someone to talk to.
- 7 What are your? I mean, do you have any hobbies? Do you play any sports?
- 8 Our are ready to attack the enemy; they have a bigger than we have but it isn't as well equipped with weapons and tanks.
- 9 We're running out of food and water – we'll have to telephone and ask for more to be sent.
- 10 They laid the of the building months ago but they still haven't started to build it.

Complete the following sentences with the appropriate verb, article or pronoun.

- 1 Physics an interesting subject at school but I wasn't very good at
- 2 Athletics less popular before the Olympics made fashionable.
- 3 Politics by no means the only area where women are doing better but is one of the most important.
- 4 Classics what I wanted to study but my parents persuaded me that economics more useful so I did instead.
- 5 I think you hurt feelings when you forgot to invite her to your party.
- 6 The goods being packed now and will be delivered first thing tomorrow morning.
- 7 Could you tell me a bit about likes and dislikes? mathematics your best subject?
- 8 police co-operating with authorities in other countries which have a drugs problem.
- 9 The Government planning new taxes but don't know yet whether their own supporters will accept such a policy.
- 10 The audience requested not to bring refreshments into the auditorium.

*(Two's **company**; three's a **crowd**.)*

countable and uncountable nouns

We can count countable nouns. A countable noun has both singular and plural forms:

apple/ apples child/ children

- We cannot count uncountable nouns. An uncountable noun has no plural form and we do not use it with *a/an*:

*We need new **furniture**.*

***Poverty** can lead to **unhappiness** and **despair**.*

- Opposite are some common errors:

✗ *The **money** **are** insufficient.*

✓ *The money **is** insufficient.*

✗ *They have **many works** to do.*

✓ *They have **a lot of work** to do.*

✗ *The **news** **are** very hopeful.*

✓ *The news **is** very hopeful.*

✗ *She gave me **a good advice**.*

✓ *She gave me **some** good advice.*

✗ *For long **travels** we use the train.*

✓ *For long **journeys** we use the train.*

Below is a summary of the basic differences between countable and uncountable nouns:

	countable example	uncountable example
use of <i>a, an, the</i>	<i>a book, the book</i>	<i>cheese, the cheese</i>
plural noun	<i>books, the books</i>	(no plural form)
<i>some</i> + noun	<i>some books</i>	<i>some cheese</i>
<i>any</i> + noun	<i>any book, any books</i>	<i>any cheese</i>
<i>enough</i> + noun	<i>enough books</i>	<i>enough cheese</i>
<i>many</i> + noun	<i>many books</i>	(not possible)
<i>few/a few</i> + noun	<i>(a) few books</i>	(not possible)
<i>less</i> + noun	(not possible)	<i>less cheese</i>
<i>little/a little</i> + noun	(not possible)	<i>(a) little cheese</i>
<i>much</i> + noun	(not possible)	<i>much cheese</i>
<i>that/this</i> + noun	<i>that/this book</i>	<i>that/this cheese</i>
<i>those/these</i> + noun	<i>those/these books</i>	(not possible)

- We can also say:
*This is **a fine cheese**.* (= a fine variety or type)
***These cheeses** are produced only in Italy.*
(= these types of cheese)
- We can say *one fish, two fish, one deer, two deer*.
We can also say *all the fishes in the sea*. (= the different varieties of fish)

plural forms

- Here are nouns with regular plural forms:
*computer/ **computers***
*address/ **addresses***
*box/ **boxes***
*city/ **cities***
*journey/ **journeys***

- Here are examples of nouns with irregular plural forms:
*aircraft/ **aircraft***
*calf/ **calves***
*child/ **children***
*cod/ **cod***
*deer/ **deer***
*foot/ **feet***
*fish/ **fish***
*fruit/ **fruit***
*loaf/ **loaves***
*mouse/ **mice***
*rendezvous/ **rendezvous***
*series/ **series***
*species/ **species***
- sheep/ **sheep***
*tooth/ **teeth***
*Walkman/ **Walkmans***
*wife/ **wives***
*woman/ **women***

common mistakes with plurals

- Some uncountable nouns are often countable nouns in other languages and will cause special difficulty. Here are some of the most common ones:
*She gave me **advice** but I didn't listen.*
*Could you help me to carry all this **baggage**?*
*The **countryside** here is beautiful.*
*Accidents cause a lot of **damage** – be careful.*
*I don't feel comfortable with electronic **equipment**.*
*Can you give us any more **evidence**? This **evidence** is not very reliable.*
*I like your **furniture** – where did you get it?*
*Your **hair** looks great – how do you get it to look like that?*
*She is in very good **health**.*
*The teacher gives a lot of **homework** and expects it in on time.*
*Where do you get your **information** from – is it reliable?*
*Do you have much **knowledge** of economic theory?*
*I don't need this **money** – take it back.*
*The **news** says the **weather** is going to get better.*
*What he said was **nonsense** – wasn't it?*
*I've got **permission** to go.*
*You've made **progress** – keep trying.*
*I made the **spaghetti** especially for you – did you like it?*
*I had a lot of **work** to do in town and I've only just finished it. (Compare *I had lots of jobs and I've only just finished them.*)*
- The words *means*, *series* and *species* look like plural nouns but they are usually countable and singular:
*They found that the only **means** to cross the river was to swim.*
*Which is your favourite **series** on TV?*
*It was a **series** about an animal hospital.*
*One **species** is destroyed in forest fires every day.*
- Spaghetti looks like a plural noun but it is uncountable:
*The **spaghetti** is ready.*

common uncountable nouns

- Below is a list of nouns which are uncountable. In some cases, there is a singular or plural use when we refer to a particular variety or example:

absence	advice	age
agriculture	anger	atmosphere
baggage	beauty	behaviour
bread	childhood	comfort
company	concern	confidence
countryside	courage	damage
death	democracy	depression
design	duty	earth
education	electricity	energy
environment	equipment	evil
evidence	existence	experience
failure	faith	fear
flesh	food	freedom
fun	furniture	ground
growth	hair	happiness
health	help	homework
ice	industry	information
intelligence	justice	knowledge
love	luck	luggage
machinery	means	money
music	nature	news
nonsense	paper	peace
permission	poverty	pride
progress	reality	research
rubbish	seaside	spaghetti
traffic	training	transport
travel	weather	work

- If we refer to a specific amount with certain uncountable nouns, we can use *a piece of*, *a bit of*, *a slice of*, etc:
a bit of cheese
a blob of paint
a bunch of flowers
a cup of coffee
a drop of water
a glass of orange juice
a loaf of bread
a lump of sugar
a piece of paper
a pile of rubbish
a pool of blood
a portion of chicken
a slice of bread
a spot of rain
a touch of flu

COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

Some words can be both countable and uncountable. Here are examples:

noun	countable example	uncountable example
chicken	He sat there and ate a whole chicken .	I'll have some chicken and chips, please.
coffee	I'd love a coffee now. (= cup of coffee)	Is there any coffee left?
experience	Failing an exam was a new experience for me.	Have you had any previous experience ?
fruit	A kumquat is an exotic fruit .	You should eat fruit every day.
hair	The cat has left white hairs all over the sofa.	Get your hair cut – it's getting too long.
juice	I'd like an orange juice , please. (= a glass of)	I'll just squeeze some juice from these oranges.
noise	I heard a noise outside the window.	Stop making so much noise .

Sometimes, the countable and uncountable forms have completely different meanings:

noun	countable example	uncountable example
iron	Is the iron hot enough?	Spinach is full of iron .
paper	Go to the newsagents and get me a paper , will you? (= newspaper)	You'll need some paper to write on.
wood	There's a wood near our house.	His sculpture was made of wood .
work	the complete works of Shakespeare	I've got a bit of work to do now.

Complete the sentences.

- | Down | Across |
|---|--|
| 1 By the time he got back, his had grown past his shoulders. | 4 The of elderly people can really suffer in the winter months. |
| 2 No wonder she looks so tired – she's got twelve to look after. | 5 Within minutes, the vultures had stripped the bones of all their |
| 3 Have you heard from your parents? What's their latest | 8 I have to move all my to my new house by the weekend. |
| 6 I don't know whether I prefer the of Strauss or Mozart. | 9 I still stand by my claim that make better drivers. |
| 7 Between the two of them, their of how computers work is negligible. | 12 They swallowed their and apologised. |
| 10 Do you agree that there's far too much in the world? | 13 With all the in the world, I'm still not likely to pass this test. |
| 11 I've got a great deal of left to do. | 14 With the destruction of the rainforests, we're losing a hundred per week. |

Fill in each space in the following sentences with an appropriate form of a countable or uncountable noun.

- 1 I need some about buying a house. I've never bought one before.
- 2 This type of bear has been declared an endangered
- 3 You should eat fresh such as oranges every day.
- 4 which is used by dentists should be kept clean.
- 5 *Beverly Hills 90210* is a TV about young people in America.
- 6 She got to leave class early because she wasn't feeling well.
- 7 Jane has long blond that comes down to her shoulders.
- 8 Kids can use for games but they also have access to the Internet.
- 9 You'll find all the you need in the shed.
- 10 I have so much maths to do that I won't be able to watch TV.

Complete these pairs of sentences using the correct form of one of these words. Use *a / an* where necessary.

beer cod iron experience noise
deer work

- 1 I saw grazing in the field and took a picture of it.
Yesterday, there were in the field but now they've gone.
- 2 Two pieces of and some chips, please.
The North Sea is full of
- 3 I'm thirsty. Let's have in that pub over there.
In Britain, people go to pubs to drink , not watch television.
- 4 The huge gate was made of
John bought himself and started ironing his own clothes.

- 5 She's had with children before and would make a good baby-sitter.
Moving house is I'd rather forget.
- 6 *Hamlet* is one of Shakespeare's finest
Gareth has been without for six months now and jobs are hard to find.
- 7 She'd been working in her room till disturbed her.
In addition to car fumes, can also be a form of pollution.

Fill in the spaces in the following text with one appropriate word, or put – if no word is needed.

The chance of a job

David had been buying (1) paper every day for months though he wasn't interested in (2) news about the latest disasters around the world. It was (3) work he wanted. David had been out of (4) work for ages and when he got the chance of (5) job in the local youth centre he applied at once. He rang and asked them for (6) information about (7) job and they told him he needed to have (8) experience of working with (9) children and if possible (10) training in counselling techniques. David had quite a lot of (11) knowledge of counselling because he had (12) degree in psychology from (13) Edinburgh University and at one time he had seriously considered doing (14) research in educational psychology. Before going to the interview, he asked his mum for (15) advice about what he should wear, and she told him to wear a suit and get his hair cut.

compound nouns

form

A compound noun consists of two or three words that function like one word. There are very many compound nouns in English.

form	example
noun + noun:	<i>notebook, science fiction, timetable</i>
adjective + noun:	<i>fast lane, fast food, first aid</i>
verb + preposition:	<i>break-up, check-out, take-over,</i>
three words, with the first two words used adjectivally and usually joined with a hyphen	<i>back-seat driver, one-parent family, ready-made meal, three-piece suite</i>

- We sometimes write compound nouns as two words, sometimes with a hyphen and sometimes as one word:

<i>address book</i>	<i>baby-sitter</i>
<i>brother-in-law</i>	<i>human being</i>
<i>mother tongue</i>	<i>pen-friend</i>
<i>road-works</i>	<i>sunglasses</i>
<i>youth hostel</i>	

There are no definite rules about this. If in doubt, consult a good modern dictionary.

countable or uncountable?

- Compound nouns may be countable:
one alarm clock – two alarm clocks
a car-park – several car-parks
a compact disc – many compact discs
- Compound nouns may be uncountable:
air-traffic control *chewing gum*
mineral water *table tennis*
- Some compound nouns have only a plural form:
armed forces *baked beans*
human rights *road-works*

Here is a list of common countable, uncountable and plural compound nouns:

countable CC	uncountable	plural
<i>baggage hall</i>	<i>air-conditioning</i>	<i>bagpipes</i>
<i>bank account</i>	<i>blood pressure</i>	<i>bedclothes</i>
<i>break-in</i>	<i>cardboard</i>	<i>civil rights</i>
<i>break-out</i>	<i>central heating</i>	<i>current affairs</i>
<i>burglar alarm</i>	<i>common sense</i>	<i>denim jeans</i>
<i>can-opener</i>	<i>cotton wool</i>	<i>easy pickings</i>
<i>car-park</i>	<i>dry-cleaning</i>	<i>French fries</i>
<i>clothes peg</i>	<i>e-mail</i>	<i>French windows</i>
<i>computer game</i>	<i>fancy dress</i>	<i>high heels</i>
<i>credit card</i>	<i>fast food</i>	<i>inverted commas</i>
<i>cut-back</i>	<i>feedback</i>	<i>last orders</i>
<i>database</i>	<i>first aid</i>	<i>legal proceedings</i>
<i>dining-room</i>	<i>food poisoning</i>	<i>luxury goods</i>
<i>dishwasher</i>	<i>higher education</i>	<i>marching orders</i>
<i>drawing pin</i>	<i>iced tea</i>	<i>modern</i>
<i>driving licence</i>	<i>ill-treatment</i>	<i>languages</i>
<i>fairy-tale</i>	<i>job-sharing</i>	<i>nail scissors</i>
<i>film star</i>	<i>junk food</i>	<i>natural</i>
<i>frying pan</i>	<i>keyhole surgery</i>	<i>resources</i>
<i>letter box</i>	<i>lateral thinking</i>	<i>nutcrackers</i>
<i>life-support system</i>	<i>make-up</i>	<i>Olympic games</i>
<i>minimum wage</i>	<i>metalwork</i>	<i>opening hours</i>
<i>mirror image</i>	<i>mineral water</i>	<i>outskirts</i>
<i>mobile phone</i>	<i>New Year's Day</i>	<i>party politics</i>
<i>motorway</i>	<i>Oedipus complex</i>	<i>race relations</i>
<i>numberplate</i>	<i>orange squash</i>	<i>reading glasses</i>
<i>painkiller</i>	<i>ovenware</i>	<i>road-works</i>
<i>pay packet</i>	<i>peacetime</i>	<i>roller-skates</i>
<i>penalty shoot-out</i>	<i>power dressing</i>	<i>scare tactics</i>
<i>pepper grinder</i>	<i>rain-water</i>	<i>sunglasses</i>
<i>question mark</i>	<i>real estate</i>	<i>sunglasses</i>
<i>road-map</i>	<i>software</i>	<i>swimming</i>
<i>skateboard</i>	<i>stomachache</i>	<i>trunks</i>
<i>television series</i>	<i>sunshine</i>	<i>taste-buds</i>
<i>throwback</i>	<i>toilet-paper</i>	<i>traffic lights</i>
<i>trial run</i>	<i>tomato ketchup</i>	<i>underpants</i>
<i>washing-up</i>	<i>venture capital</i>	<i>varicose veins</i>
<i>word processor</i>	<i>whooping cough</i>	<i>walking boots</i>
	<i>work experience</i>	<i>winter sports</i>
	<i>writing paper</i>	<i>waterworks</i>
		<i>worry beads</i>

Decide whether the following compound nouns are countable or uncountable.
Add them to the chart. Four examples are given.

heart attack
high school

old age
pocket money

letterbox
washing powder
parking meter
remote control
show business
social work
toilet-paper
police station
post office
sleeping bag
swimming pool

pen-friend
personal computer
soda water
news bulletin
package holiday
passer-by
washing-up liquid
water skiing
writing paper
human nature
washing machine

Match the following parts of compound nouns and then fill in the blanks in the sentences using the most appropriate compound.

noun and noun

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1 suit | a food |
| 2 telephone | b card |
| 3 zebra | c case |
| 4 fire | d writer |
| 5 dish | e alarm |
| 6 type | f opener |
| 7 credit | g brigade |
| 8 burglar | h washer |
| 9 can | crossing |
| 10 junk | number |

- They should put a outside the school so that children don't get run over.
- It's freezing in here – why don't you get installed?
- When I don't have time to cook I send the kids out to get some
- Is the you get from your parents enough for your needs?
- Can you send the quickly – the house next door is on fire.
- When you leave primary school and get to, lessons get much more difficult.
- He'll never think of such a simple solution because he hasn't got any
- Who's got the for the TV? I'm bored with this programme.
- Could you get my suit from the for me on your way home?
- After the last break-in, they decided to get a installed.

adjective and noun

- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1 fast | a heating |
| 2 remote | b fries |
| 3 social | c food |
| 4 high | d control |
| 5 central | e cleaner's |
| 6 common | f rights |
| 7 French | g worker |
| 8 dry | h languages |
| 9 human | school |
| 10 modern | sense |

COMPOUND NOUNS

Complete the sentences. Each word is part of a compound.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 My-cleaning has to be picked up before six. | 8 We can omit commas when we report what someone thinks. |
| 2 Eric thinks he's so cool – he even wearsglasses when it's raining. | 9 Katy's-up looks like it was put on with a trowel. |
| 7 At our school the central wouldn't be turned on until October. | 10 Did you know that chewing is illegal in Singapore? |
| | 11 It's just common not to walk home on your own. |

Down

- 1 We could hire a van – do you have a valid licence?
- 2 My brother read social at university and he can't get a job with a decent salary.
- 3 As a student, food suited me fine.
- 4 I'd like a cheeseburger and large French, please.
- 5 The multistorey car- is going to be knocked down.
- 6 I stood at the bus for over an hour, and then six buses came along at once.
- 7 It's about time the world paid more attention to rights issues.

Complete the sentences below with one of the following compound nouns.

*print-out setback hold-up getaway check-outs break-out
break-in break-up take-over take-away take-off check-in*

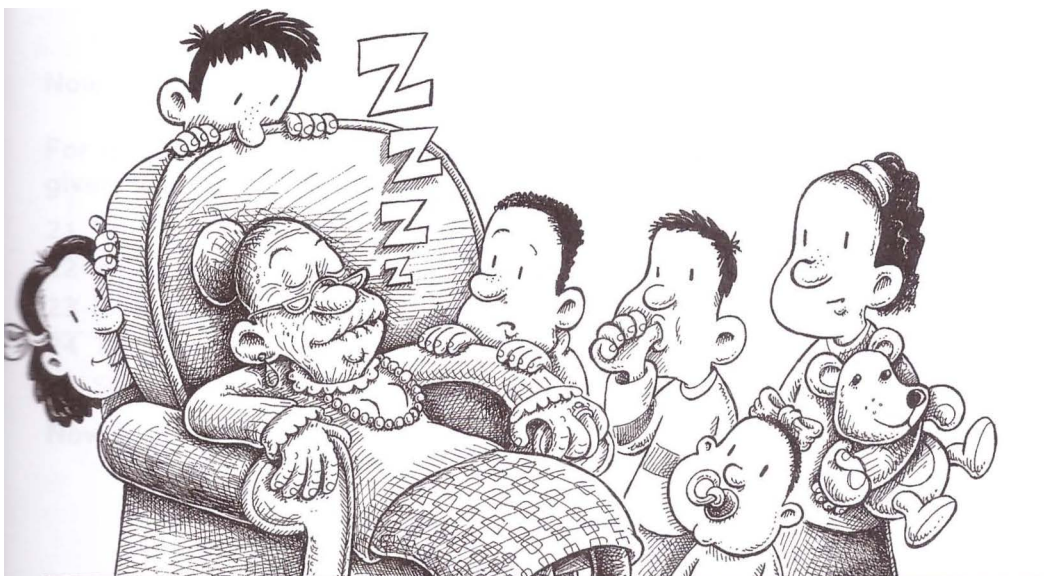
- 1 Since the we've had all our locks changed.
- 2 The recent crime figures are a major for law and order.
- 3 There was a on the motorway this morning.
- 4 The thieves made their through a downstairs window.
- 5 Why can't they have more open so customers don't have to wait?
- 6 There was a mass last night from Winston prison.
- 7 The will have serious consequence for the children.
- 8 Iraq's attempted of Kuwait led to American intervention.
- 9 Let's have a tonight – I can't be bothered to cook.
- 10 What time's? It says 19.10 on the ticket. I don't want to miss my flight.
- 11 I'd give you a of John's e-mail message, but my printer's out of order.
- 12 Let's take these suitcases to the and then we can go through passport control.

Fill in each space with an appropriate word from the list, forming a compound noun. The first (0) is given as an example.

word table ~~worker~~ washing piece meal time wife book up
electrical washer computer sitter house

A house husband

My wife is a social *worker* (0) and she works for the local council and has a very busy time..... (1) every day. She obviously can't be in full-..... (2) work and be a house..... (3) at the same time. This means I've been a (4) husband for many years now, because my job as a text..... (5) writer for students of English can be done from home working on a personal (6). As we can't afford a baby-..... (7) I'm in charge of the baby as well as having to do all the cooking and washing-..... (8). My job is made much easier by the variety of (9) goods available – I just put all the dirty plates in the dish..... (10) and the baby's clothes in the (11) machine and away I go. I'm free to produce yet another master..... (12) for students on my (13) processor. When my wife comes home at three she has a ready-made (14) to look forward to. Not bad, eh?



Grandma loved acting as *baby-sitter* for her *grandchildren*, but would always fall asleep in the *armchair* before they did. Once her five-year-old *grandson* woke her up, saying 'Wake up, Granny, it's past my *bedtime*'.