

- a flock of sheep/pigeons a series of concerts/lectures
two flocks of sheep/pigeons two series of concerts/lectures

(iii) Of singular count nouns; eg:

- a piece of a leather belt two pieces of a broken cup
a page of a book two acts of a play

(b) QUALITY PARTITION is expressed most commonly with kind and sort; eg:

- count { a new kind of several new kinds of
computer computer(s)
one sort of silk tie two sorts of silk tie(s)

- noncount { a delicious kind of some delicious kinds of
bread bread
a fashionable sort of fashionable sorts of
wallpaper wallpaper

Other quality partitiones include *type*, *variety*, and (especially with such materials as coffee or tobacco) *blend*.

NOTE

[a] Both quantity and quality partition may be expressed by treating the noun itself as though it expressed a quantity or quality. Thus a noncount noun can be given count characteristics and *two coffees* may in appropriate contexts mean either 'two cups of coffee' or 'two types of coffee'.

[b] Quantity partitiones may be expressions of precise measure; eg a yard of cloth, two kilos of potatoes. There can also be fractional partition and this may cooccur with normal quantity partition, as in 'He ate a quarter of that (joint of) beef'.

[c] Since there is no necessary connection between countability and referential meaning, many English nouns can simulate the plural only by partitive constructions where their translation equivalents in some other languages are count nouns with singular and plural forms. Eg:

- some information ~ some pieces of information
his anger ~ his bursts of anger

Determiners

5.3 In actual usage, nouns appear in noun phrases (Chapter 17), and the kind of reference such a noun phrase has depends on the accompanying DETERMINER. We distinguish three classes of determiners, set up on the basis of their position in the noun phrase in relation to each other:

- Central determiners (eg: *the*, *a*, *this*)
Predeterminers (eg: *half*, *all*, *double*; as in *all the people*)
Postdeterminers (eg: *seven*, *many*, *few*; as in *the many passengers*)

Central determiners

the, a, and zero

5.4 The definite and indefinite articles are the commonest central determiners and, as we saw in 5.1, their distribution is dependent upon the class of the accompanying noun. Relating definiteness to number, we have the following system for count and noncount nouns:

	COUNT	NONCOUNT
SINGULAR	{ definite indefinite	the book a book
PLURAL	{ definite indefinite	the books books

Beside the sole definite article *the*, we thus have two indefinite articles *a* and *zero*, the former occurring with singular count nouns, its zero analogue with noncount and plural count nouns. Both *the* and *a* have a different form when the following word begins with a vowel, though *the* does not display this difference in writing:

- the bird* [ðə] ~ *the owl* [ðɪ]
a bird [ə] ~ *an owl* [ən]

The use of the articles is examined in 5.11ff.

NOTE

[a] The indefinite article *a/an* can be regarded as an unstressed numeral *one*; cf *one or two pounds* ~ *a pound or two*.

[b] With nouns beginning with *h*, the prevocalic forms are used if this is not pronounced:

- [ðɪ] *honour* *an hour*

Thus for those who do not pronounce *h* before unstressed syllables a difference is observed between such pairs as '*history* and *hi'storical*':

- a history book* ~ *an historical novel*

[c] When the articles are stressed for any reason (as for example in slow speech and especially in AmE), they are pronounced [ði], [eɪ], [æn].

5.5 Like the definite article, there are several other determiners that can cooccur equally with singular count, plural count, and noncount nouns.

(a) The DEMONSTRATIVES *this* and *that* (with noncount and singular count nouns), *these* and *those* (with plural count nouns):

I prefer *this* picture/music to *that* (picture/music).

These desks are imported but *those* tables are made locally.

(b) The POSSESSIVES *my*, *our*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *their*:

I admire *her* house/*her* books/*her* taste.

(c) The *wh*-determiners *which*, *whose*, *whichever*, *whatever*, *whosever*, whether as relatives, indefinite relatives, or interrogatives: