

There Is / There Are

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Grammar Notes

THERE IS / THERE ARE

When “there” begins a sentence, it has no meaning. It is called an “empty subject.” We can use “there” and the Be verb to describe the **amount** and **location** of an object.

Is “there” singular or plural? It depends on the object (the noun that follows the Be verb).

A. Positive Sentences

Sentences beginning with “there” follow specific patterns in English. We use “there is” when the object noun is singular (one) and “there are” when it is plural (two or more).

| Type | Pattern | Examples |
|---------------|---|---|
| Singular Noun | There + is + a + noun + preposition + the + noun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a cat on the bed. • There is a girl in the photo. • There is a tree in the front yard. |
| Plural Noun | There + are (+ quantifier) + noun + preposition + the + noun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are apples in the fridge. • There are two pillows on the bed. • There are many people at the gym. |



Grammar Notes cont.

A. Positive Sentences cont.

Note #1

Did you notice the articles in the example sentences?
We use **a** or **an** after Be and **the** after the preposition.

- There is **a** cat on **the** bed.
- There is **a** clock on **the** nightstand.
- There is **an** orange in **the** bowl.

Note #2

Some nouns in English are uncountable. For example, we can't count snow, rain, water, or milk. Use "there is" with these non-count nouns even if you use a quantifier like "some" or "a lot of."

- There **is** **water** in the bathtub.
- There **is** some **snow** on the trees.
- There **is** a lot of **rice** on the plate.

Note #3

It is common to **shorten** "there is" to "there's" (especially when speaking). We can **never** shorten "there are" to "there're" because it is too difficult to pronounce "there're"!

- ✓ **There's** a dog in the park.
- × There're two dogs in the park.

Note #4

Some sentences don't include "preposition + the + noun." This happens when the location is obvious or not important.

- There is a good explanation.
- There is some new information.
- There are many children here today.

Memory Trick

Almost every sentence with "there is" and "there are" needs an **-s**! If there is no -s at the end of the object noun, use "is." If there is an -s at the end of the noun, use "are."

- There **is** a plate in the cabinet.
- There **is** milk in the fridge.
- There are **pens** in my bag.

Grammar Notes cont.

B. Negative Sentences

Negative sentences starting with “there” usually take a **plural** verb and a **plural** object noun. We can use **aren’t + any** or **are + no** with no difference in meaning.

| Type | Pattern | Examples |
|---------------|---|---|
| Negative Verb | There + aren’t + any + plural noun + preposition + the + noun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There aren’t any books on the table. • There aren’t any leaves in the yard. • There aren’t any good movies in the theater. |
| Negative Noun | There + are + no + plural noun + preposition + the + noun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no children at the park. • There are no blankets on the bed. • There are no rules for the game. |

Note #5

It is more common for negative sentences starting with “there” to take a plural verb and object noun, but a singular verb and object noun are also possible.

- There **isn’t** any **reason** to keep studying.
- There **is** no **snow** on the ground.

Grammar Notes cont.

C. Questions

Yes/no questions with “there” begin with the Be verb. This is the normal pattern for simple present tense questions with Be. Short answers include “Yes, there is/are” and “No, there isn’t/aren’t.”

| Type | Pattern | Questions | Answers |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Singular Noun & Non-Count Noun | Is + there + a + noun + preposition + the + noun? | Is there a textbook on the desk? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there is. • No, there isn't. |
| | | Is there a boy on the playground? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there is. • No, there isn't. |
| | | Is there sand on the beach? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there is. • No, there isn't. |
| Plural Noun | Are + there (+ any) + noun + preposition + the + noun? | Are there errors in my essay? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there are. • No, there aren't. |
| | | Are there any cookies in the cabinet? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there are. • No, there aren't. |
| | | Are there any good shows on TV? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there are. • No, there aren't. |

Grammar Notes cont.

D. Present & Past Tenses

We use “there is” and “there are” to describe scenes in the simple present tense. To describe a scene in the simple past tense, we can use “there was” and “there were.”

| | Simple Present | Simple Past |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Verb Form | is / are | was / were |
| Singular Noun & Non-Count Noun | There is a mess in the kitchen today. | There was a mess in the kitchen yesterday. |
| | There isn't any ice on the road. | There wasn't any ice on the road. |
| | Is there an e-reader on the desk? | Was there an e-reader on the desk? |
| Plural Noun | There are many people on the bus today. | There were many people on the bus yesterday. |
| | There aren't any books on the floor. | There weren't any books on the floor. |
| | Are there any dogs at the park? | Were there any dogs at the park? |

Grammar Notes cont.

E. Nouns in a Series

When “there + Be” is followed by more than one noun object, the normal rules do not apply. We would expect that two or more nouns would take a plural verb, but this does not happen. It all depends on the **first noun** in the series. The Be verb agrees with that first noun only.

| # | Rule | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | When the first noun in a series is singular, use “there is.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a book and an apple in my backpack. • There is a dog and two cats in your yard. • There is an orange, a banana, and a plum in the bowl. |
| 2 | When the first noun in a series is plural, use “there are.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are jackets and shoes in the closet. • There are 15 boys and 11 girls in my class. • There are many pens and a pencil on the desk. |
| 3 | When the first noun in a series is uncountable, use “there is.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is ice and rocks on the road. • There is juice, milk, and water in the fridge. • There is some sugar and a lot of butter in these cookies. |

Exercise 1

THERE IS OR THERE ARE?

Circle the correct answer.

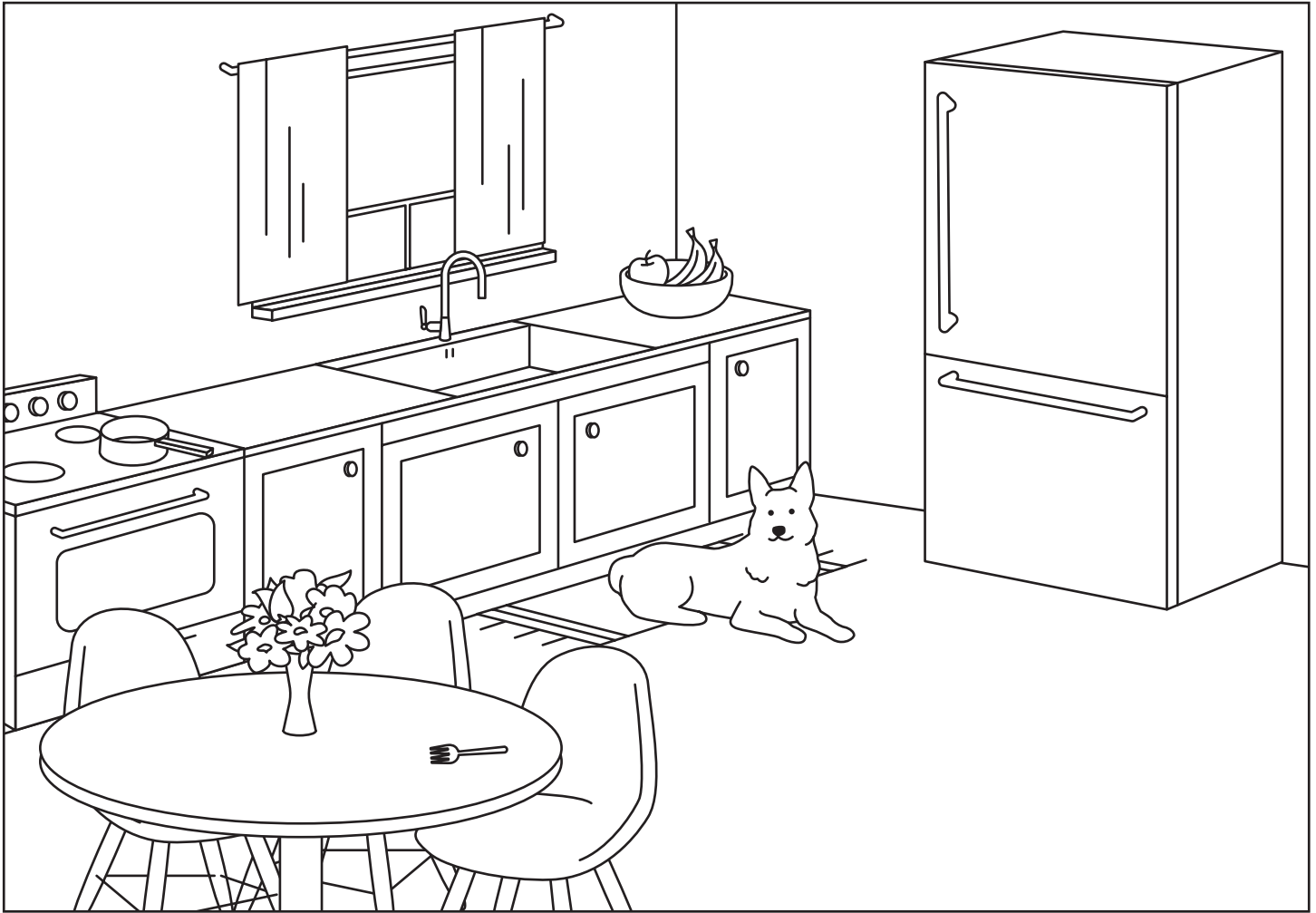
Ex. There _____ boxes of old clothes to donate.

- a) is
- b) are

1. There _____ several tall buildings on Main Street.
 - a) is
 - b) are
2. There _____ a new lamp in the living room.
 - a) is
 - b) are
3. There _____ a lot of students from South America at this school.
 - a) is
 - b) are
4. There _____ bugs on my windshield.
 - a) is
 - b) are
5. There _____ a cute puppy in the window.
 - a) 's
 - b) 're
6. There _____ any bottles in the recycling bin.
 - a) isn't
 - b) aren't
7. There _____ a woman from Turkey in the cafeteria.
 - a) 's
 - b) 're
8. There _____ computers at this library.
 - a) is no
 - b) are no
9. There _____ a rule about chewing gum in class.
 - a) is
 - b) are
10. There _____ any excuses for her bad behavior.
 - a) isn't
 - b) aren't

Exercise 3

IN THE KITCHEN



A. Vocabulary

Look at the picture and make a list of the nouns you see.

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

Exercise 4

THERE WAS OR THERE WERE?

Circle the correct answer.

Ex. There _____ ants on our picnic blanket last weekend.

a) was

b) were

1. There _____ a scratch on my car yesterday.

a) was

b) were

2. There _____ two World Wars in the 20th century.

a) was

b) were

3. There _____ a big sale at the mall last Wednesday.

a) was

b) were

4. There _____ snowboards in the rental shop.

a) was no

b) were no

5. There _____ five English classes on last week's schedule.

a) was

b) were

6. There _____ a single cookie left in the tin.

a) wasn't

b) weren't

7. There _____ a rabbit in my backyard last night.

a) was

b) were

8. There _____ any instructions on the test.

a) wasn't

b) weren't

9. There _____ a blanket on the bed.

a) was

b) were

10. There _____ a lot of homework from yesterday's class.

a) was

b) were

Exercise 5

QUESTIONS

Fill in the missing verb.

Ex. Q: Are there any good movies at the theater today?

A: Yes, there are.

1. Q: _____ there many biology textbooks in the bookstore?

A: No, there aren't.

2. Q: Are there any students from Brazil in the class?

A: Yes, there _____.

3. Q: _____ there an eraser on the desk?

A: Yes, there is.

4. Q: _____ there any books I can borrow?

A: No, there aren't.

5. Q: _____ there another teacher for Reading Level 1?

A: Yes, there is.

6. Q: Are there a lot of mistakes in that paragraph?

A: No, there _____.

7. Q: Is there any food left from the party?

A: No, there _____.

8. Q: _____ there another way home?

A: Yes, there is.

Exercise 6

CLASS SURVEY

How Environmentally Friendly Are You?

A. Speaking

Ask your classmates these questions.

When someone answers "yes," put a check mark (✓) in one of the boxes next to the question.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you usually recycle? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you use plastic straws? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you buy plastic water bottles? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you bring your own bags when shopping? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you litter? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

B. Writing

Write five sentences about your classmates using "There is" or "There are."

Ex. There are five people who usually recycle.
There aren't any people who litter.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Exercise 7

NOUNS IN A SERIES

Write "There is" or "There are" in each sentence.

Ex. There are two books and a pen on the desk.

1. _____ a dog and a cat in the basement.
2. _____ a pillow and three blankets on the bed.
3. _____ four adults and a baby on the couch.
4. _____ snow and ice in our driveway.
5. _____ a lot of books on the bookshelf.
6. _____ flowers and vegetables in my garden.
7. _____ cheese and crackers on the table.
8. _____ a lot of sand on the beach.
9. _____ five cars and one truck in the parking lot.
10. _____ cookies and fruit for dessert.

Exercise 8 (Student A)

PAIR WORK

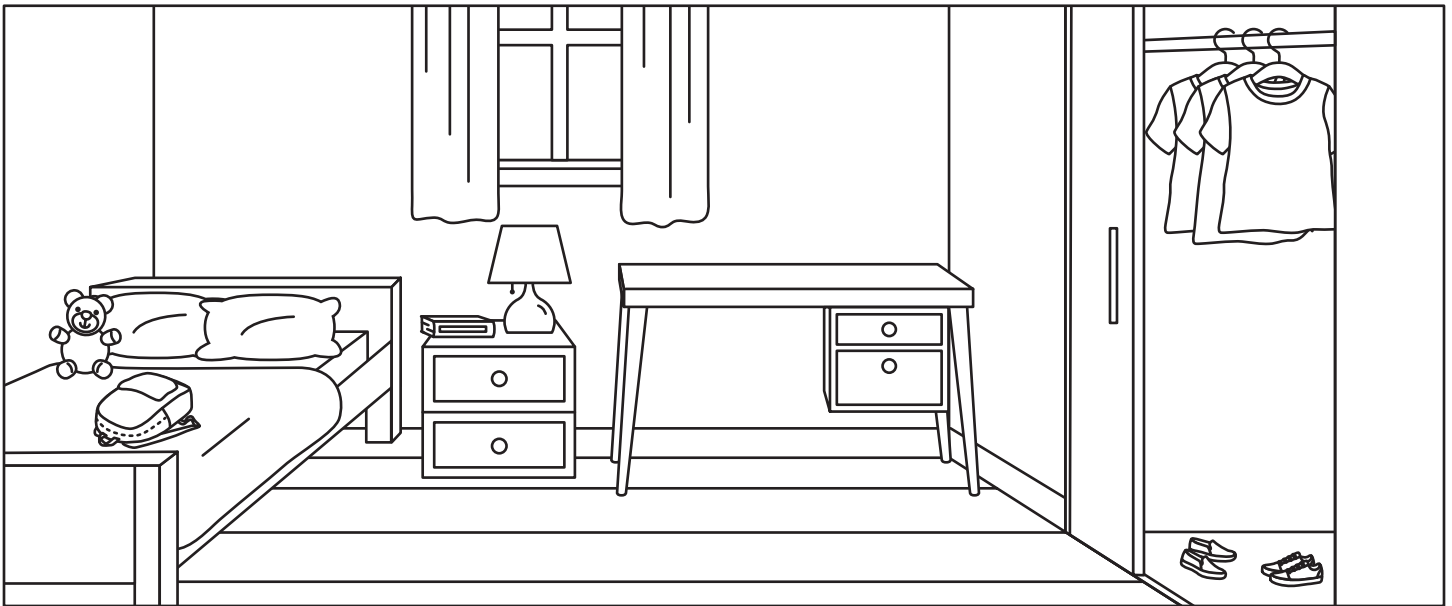
A. Ask

Ask your partner these questions.
Then draw the missing items.

1. What is on the floor?
2. What is on the wall?
3. What is on the desk?

B. Answer

Look at the picture below.
Answer your partner's questions.



Word List

| | | | | |
|----------|---------|------------|---------------|----------|
| backpack | apple | teddy bear | picture | computer |
| pillow | clock | lamp | pair of shoes | |
| book | T-shirt | phone | pair of socks | |

Exercise 8 (Student B)

PAIR WORK

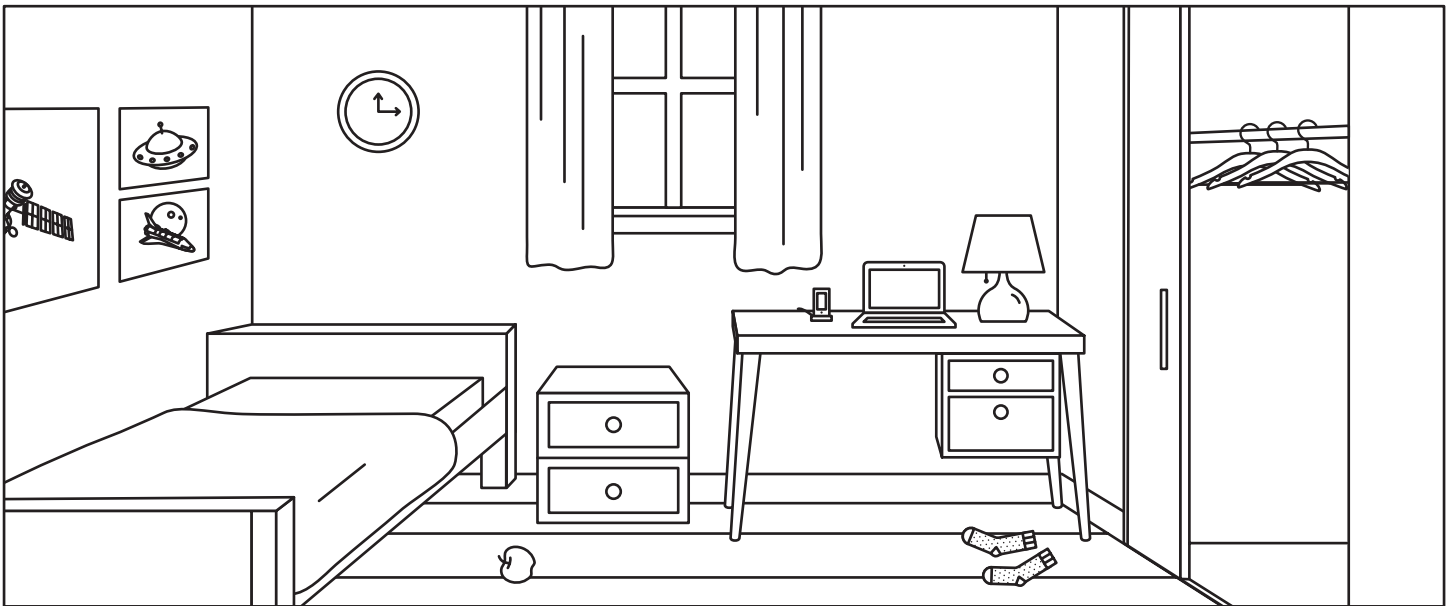
A. Answer

Look at the picture below.
Answer your partner's questions.

B. Ask

Ask your partner these questions.
Then draw the missing items.

1. What is on the bed?
2. What is in the closet?
3. What is on the nightstand?



Word List

| | | | | |
|----------|---------|------------|---------------|----------|
| backpack | apple | teddy bear | picture | computer |
| pillow | clock | lamp | pair of shoes | |
| book | T-shirt | phone | pair of socks | |

Exercise 9

FIND THE ERROR

Find one error in each sentence. Rewrite the sentences correctly.

Ex. There are a pen and two pencils in my bag.

There is a pen and two pencils in my bag.

1. There are an empty apartment in my building.

2. There are five student from Vietnam in our class.

3. There is the cat on the chair.

4. There are a textbook and a notebook on the desk.

5. There were eight child on the playground yesterday.

6. There was glasses of juice on the counter.

7. Are there another math teacher at this school?

8. There is a lot of people from Europe at my school.

9. Were there any chicken left after dinner?

10. There was rocks and ice on the road.

Exercise 10

QUIZ




Circle the correct answer.

1. There _____ six students in the cafeteria.
a) was
b) were
2. There _____ a chair, a table, and a lamp in the living room.
a) is
b) are
3. _____ there any vegetables in the fridge?
a) Is
b) Are
4. There _____ no apartments for rent.
a) was
b) were
5. There _____ three women from Russia in my English class.
a) is
b) are
6. There _____ a couch in this room.
a) isn't
b) aren't
7. There _____ two accidents on the highway yesterday.
a) was
b) were
8. There _____ rice and beans on the table.
a) is
b) are
9. _____ there any survivors from the plane crash?
a) Is
b) Are
10. There _____ any students at the bus stop at 6:30 am.
a) were
b) weren't
11. There _____ a blue car in my driveway.
a) 's
b) 're
12. _____ there a pencil or a pen I could borrow?
a) Is
b) Are

Grammar Assessment

Student / Group: _____

| Date | Level | Assessed By | Target | Skill |
|------|-------|-------------|----------------------|---------|
| | | | There Is / There Are | Grammar |

| Criteria | Achieved  | Achieved with Help  | Needs Improvement  |
|--|---|---|--|
| demonstrates correct usage of "there is" with singular and non-count nouns | | | |
| demonstrates correct usage of "there are" with plural nouns | | | |
| uses the correct verb form for positive and negative sentences | | | |
| uses the correct verb form in questions | | | |
| uses the correct verb form with different tenses | | | |
| uses the correct verb form with nouns in a series | | | |

Notes




Self-Assessment

THERE IS / THERE ARE

Add check marks (✓) to show what you've learned in this lesson.

Name: _____

Date: _____

| Can I... | Yes (very well)  | Yes (with help)  | Not yet  |
|---|--|--|--|
| say and write "there is" and "there are" correctly in positive sentences? | | | |
| use "there is" and "there are" correctly in negative sentences? | | | |
| make questions with "is there" and "are there"? | | | |
| make simple past sentences with "there was" and "there were"? | | | |
| choose the correct verb form that agrees with nouns in a series? | | | |
| describe a room using "there is" and "there are"? | | | |

My Notes

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students learn how “there is” and “there are” agree with the object noun. They learn how to choose the correct verb form with count and non-count object nouns in the simple present and past tenses. This lesson also covers using “there” with nouns in a series.

LEVEL: Beg – Low Int

TIME: 2–3 hours

TAGS: there is, there are, there, be, agreement, nouns, count, non-count, uncountable, singular, plural, verbs, present, simple present, simple past, grammar, grammar exercises

Grammar Notes

Before you begin, ask your students if they know how to determine whether a verb following “there” is singular or plural. Then try to elicit the pattern for singular, plural, and uncountable nouns.

Note that the rules for there is/there are with a series of nouns are the most generally accepted rules. However, not all grammar guides agree. For more discussion and examples of there with multiple nouns, see There Is / There Are + Nouns in a Series:

<https://esllibrary.com/blog/there-is-there-are>

For a review of there, their, and they’re, see Teaching Tips on They’re, Their, and There: <https://blog.esllibrary.com/2013/07/05/teaching-tips-on-theyre-their-and-there>

Exercise 1

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. b | 5. a | 7. a | 9. a |
| 2. a | 4. b | 6. b | 8. b | 10. b |

Exercise 2

Have students complete the story individually or in pairs. Faster students can draw the apartment on the bottom half of the page, or you could assign this as a homework task.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. There are | 7. there is |
| 2. there is | 8. There are |
| 3. There is | 9. there is |
| 4. there is | 10. there are |
| 5. there is | 11. there is |
| 6. There is | |

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 3

A. VOCABULARY

Answers will vary. You may wish to go through the nouns as a class before students try Part B. Possible nouns include: stove, fridge, counter, cabinets, sink, faucet, bowl/fruit bowl, fruit, apple, bananas, picture/photo/art, window, curtains, rug/mat, dog, table, chairs, vase, flowers, fork.

B. WRITING

Answers will vary. Monitor students for correct sentence formation and agreement. Possible answers include:

- There is a pot on the stove.
- There are curtains on the window.
- There are cabinets under the sink.
- There is a fruit bowl on the counter.
- There is an apple in the fruit bowl.
- There are (two) bananas in the fruit bowl.
- There is a dog on the mat.
- There is a mat on the floor.
- There is a fridge against the wall.
- There are three chairs around the table.
- There is a fork on the table.
- There is a vase on the table.
- There are flowers in the vase.

Exercise 4

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. a | 3. a | 5. b | 7. a | 9. a |
| 2. b | 4. b | 6. a | 8. b | 10. a |

Exercise 5

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|----------|
| 1. Are | 3. Is | 5. Is | 7. isn't |
| 2. are | 4. Are | 6. aren't | 8. Is |

Exercise 6

Answers will vary. Monitor your students for correct verb form in Part B. You may want to take up the answers as a class.

Exercise 7

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. There is | 6. There are |
| 2. There is | 7. There is |
| 3. There are | 8. There is |
| 4. There is | 9. There are |
| 5. There are | 10. There are |

Exercise 8

Answers will vary. Model an example for your students if they need more help. Monitor your students for correct verb form and encourage them to make sentences using nouns in a series for each part of the bedroom. The verb form agreement will depend on your students' choice of the first noun in the series. You may want to encourage students to try using "there's" instead of "there is."

Exercise 9

1. There **is** an empty apartment in my building.
2. There are five **students** from Vietnam in our class.
3. There is **a** cat on the chair.
4. There **is** a textbook and a notebook on the desk
5. There were eight **children** on the playground yesterday.
6. There **were** glasses of juice on the counter.
7. **Is** there another math teacher at this school?
8. There **are** a lot of people from Europe at my school.
9. **Was** there any chicken left after dinner?
10. There **were** rocks and ice on the road.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 10

Use this task for review or assessment.

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. b | 5. b | 7. b | 9. b | 11. a |
| 2. a | 4. b | 6. a | 8. a | 10. b | 12. a |

Grammar Assessment

Use this tool for assessment purposes. Find Assessment

Tools that you can personalize in our Resources section:

https://esllibrary.com/resource_categories/104/resources/2352

Self-Assessment

Have your students fill out this form.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Theater* and *Behavior*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Theatre* and *Behaviour*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

For more beginner-level practice with "there is" and "there are," try our Fun Grammar Lesson: <https://esllibrary.com/courses/116/lessons/2492>

For more practice with subject-verb agreement, try this Grammar Practice Worksheets lesson: <https://esllibrary.com/courses/88/lessons/1610>