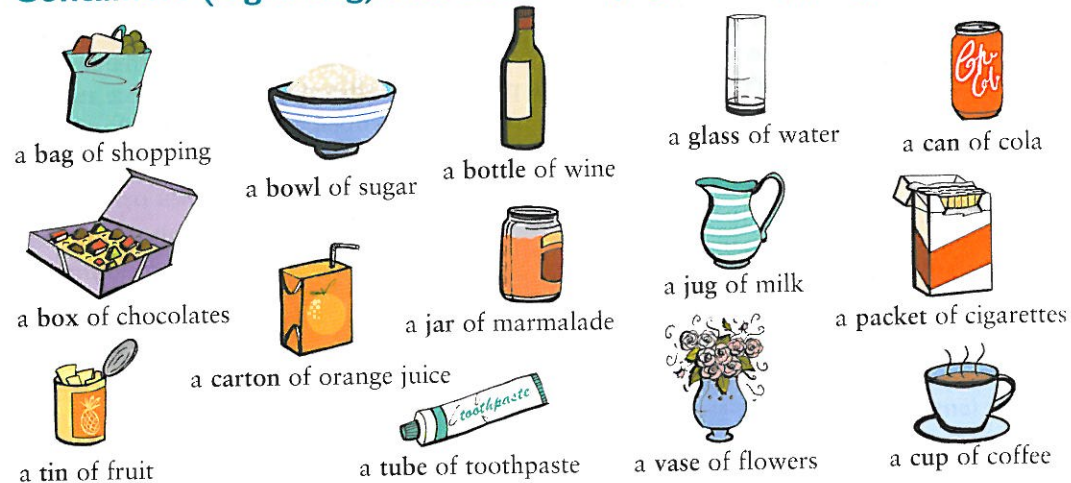


# 32

## Partitives: a bag of ..., a bit of ...

There are many different words used to describe a particular quantity of something.

### A Containers (e.g. a bag) and contents (e.g. of shopping)



### B With uncountable nouns

Certain words make uncountable nouns countable in order to describe a specific quantity, e.g. Has anyone got a **sheet** of paper I can have? Other examples are:

- |                  |                                   |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a piece of toast | a piece of cake                   | a piece of wood             |
| a slice of ham   | a slice of bread (= a thin piece) | a drop of milk (= a little) |

We use **piece** with the nouns above and some abstract nouns, e.g. a **piece** of advice, but the most common phrase in spoken English is a **bit**: we use it with a wide range of nouns.

- a bit of advice   a bit of bread   a bit of luck   a bit of time   a bit of news

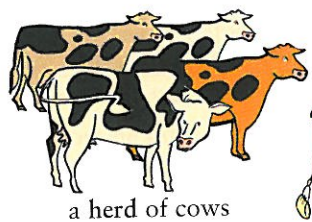
### C A pair of ...

Some nouns have two parts, e.g. trousers (two legs) and shoes (left and right). You can use **pair of** to specify the number, e.g. a **pair** of skis, two **pairs** of shoes, three **pairs** of shorts.

### D Groups of things

#### NOTE

**Gang** has a negative meaning: it suggests a group of young people who may cause trouble.



a herd of cows



a group of people



a bunch of flowers



a gang of youths/  
kids/teenagers



a bunch of grapes

## Exercises

### 32.1 Complete the phrases below the pictures.



- |                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 a ..... of milk    | 5 a ..... of water        |
| 2 a ..... of tea     | 6 a ..... of orange juice |
| 3 a ..... of fruit   | 7 a ..... of paint        |
| 4 a ..... of matches | 8 a ..... of coffee       |

### 32.2 Contents come in different containers. Are these normal or unusual? If they are unusual, change them and make them normal.

*Example* a glass of soup   Unusual: It's usually a bowl or cup of soup.

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 a vase of coffee       | 5 a bowl of milk       |
| 2 a jug of wine          | 6 a tube of cigarettes |
| 3 a jar of mustard       | 7 a bag of salt        |
| 4 a carton of toothpaste | 8 a tin of tomatoes    |

### 32.3 Complete these sentences with a suitable noun.

- I gave her a big bunch of flowers from my garden.
- The police are looking for a ..... of youths who may be responsible for the damage.
- I cut about six ..... of ham and put them on a plate.
- They own a large ..... of land on the coast.
- I did a ..... of homework last night, then went out.
- The teacher told us to take a blank ..... of paper, then write our names at the top.
- A small ..... of people gathered outside the embassy.
- I need at least two ..... of socks inside these shoes.
- I asked him for a ..... of advice.
- I like to put a ..... of cream in my coffee.
- Have you seen that old ..... of boots I use for gardening?
- I've got a ..... of time, so I can help you now if you like.

### 32.4 Underline any words in (brackets) which are wrong in these sentences.

- I asked her for a (bit/piece) of advice.
- I asked for a (piece/sheet) of cake.
- There was a (group/gang) of journalists outside her house.
- My lunch consisted of two (slices/pieces) of bread and a small (bunch/group) of grapes.
- She hit me over the head with a small (piece/bit) of wood.
- I'm in a hurry, but I've still got a (bit/piece) of time.
- We had a (piece/bit) of luck this morning: we won some money!
- Could I have a (piece/bit/drop) of milk in my coffee?