

Technical English for Engineers
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Lecture - 04
Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Good morning. Today we are going to start with something that all of us know and we have been taught this topic from right from our childhood.

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Now, this is nouns. All of us are familiar with what is definition of noun. Noun is a name of a person, place or thing. In scientific English, you will need of course, less proper noun which is a name of a person, place or thing, but of course, you have to use proper names of the proper gasses, solutions and also a kinds of burners you use. So, those are the things that **may** required knowledge of proper nouns, but that I am sure most of you would find very easy to do. Common nouns are we say a black table, a black board; we are not going to talk about very specific kind of a black board. So, therefore, I mean I will give you very common example, I have a pen, but if I say I have **sheaffer** **(Refer Time: 01:31)** pen or I have a Parker pen so that makes it very proper. So, because I am using a proper noun, specific name here.

And then abstract are those that cannot be seen, but only felt, for example - heat, for example- frozen, for example, of course, we can see boiling, but then heat, colds, freeze these are the thing that we can only feel, these are abstract. In English, generally, we use abstract nouns to express feelings and emotions; love, hate, anger, and excitement these things cannot be touched and felt. Of course, heat **can also cannot be touched** can be touched and felt, but then again it has no shape of a form. **So, this** **it** becomes more abstract. Countable, uncountable this is something that I am going to focus a lot today on because a scientist you should know what elements can be counted and what are those words in the English language that are uncountable and therefore, you have to be very clear about the way you write and speak.

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Here, we are also going to something very briefly Possessive nouns. You know there is a thing called apostrophe; for example, Meena's notebook, the better way is to say Meena's notebook and not notebook of Meena. **So, This** is something where to use possessive and where not to use possessive that is what you should be familiar with. As we have been talking about noun is a name of a person, place or thing; it denotes often when we talk about common nouns and sorry abstract nouns also, then they can also suggest things or, ideas.

The word noun by the way is derived from the Latin word nomen - n o m e n which means name. And of course, it goes without saying that nouns are prevalent, nouns exist not just in are English language, but also in every language.

Types of noun, you have as I am sure all of us have been taught in schools; we have common noun, you have proper noun, you have abstract noun, you have collective and material noun. Material noun is also a something very interesting and that you should be familiar with. Now, a common noun are used to refer general things or places, rather than is specific examples as I have already given you the example of Parker pen, Sony's camera and we are not using **just any semi** camera. Common nouns are not capitalize, so when you use the word camera, you know do not have to capitalize- C there, but when you say Sony's camera then you have to capitalize-S. So, and of course, there is another rule that whenever you begin **a** sentence, any word that you begin that sentence with it has to have a capital. So only in two situations a common noun has to be capitalized.

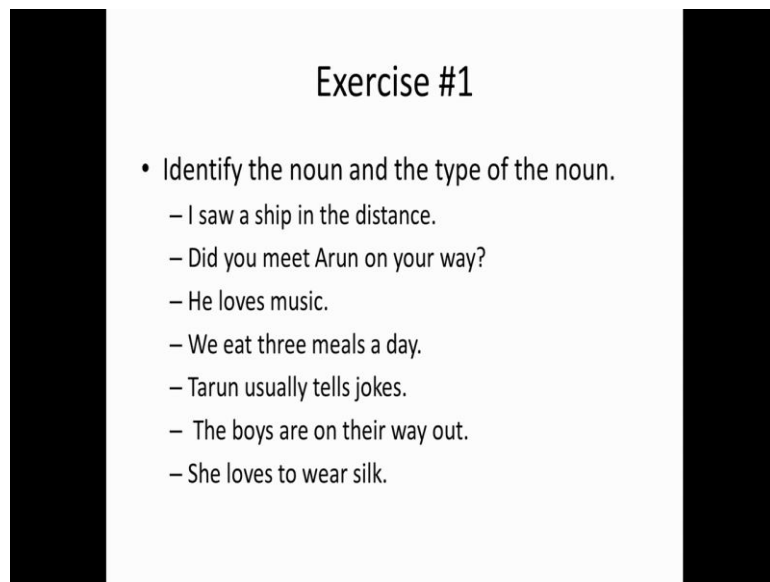
Now, let us talk about proper noun. I live in Chennai; Arjun lost the bet. So, Chennai is name of a city, and it has to be C should be in capital. Arjun lost the bet, A should be capital. India is my country, so I capital; and, all names, names of all country should be in capital, capitals, cities, great rivers, the river Nile, the river Yamuna all these require a capital. Now as we have been talking about proper noun is a name use for an individual person, place or organization the u and o. So, we are not going to write that in lower caps, , **Udot NO dot O that is a proper noun, in an all caps.**

Abstract nouns are those there refer to ideas, concepts, emotions and things that you cannot taste, feel, touch, hear etcetera. That is, let us take honesty is the best policy. Now, honesty you cannot touch and feel, you feel it of course, but you cannot have a specific amount of honesty. So, it is a non-tangible emotion. Love is a non-tangible, you cannot count it. So, therefore these are abstract nouns. So, you cannot see them, taste them, touch them, smell or hear them. They go beyond those sensations.

Collective noun is a word that refers to a group. So, it can be either singular or plural that is **the**, but it usually used in the singular. Our class graduates next year, a school of fish. So, school is a group we do not say schools of fish. A heard of sheep. The audience

loved the performance, the audience loved the movie, it has become a blockbuster. So, audience is a collective noun, and it is always and very often I mean there are always exceptions, but let us not consider them as of now, perhaps later. We should always have a team; team again is a collective noun. Material nouns are names of materials or substances out of which things are made; cotton dress, cotton saree, silk shirt, Tajmahal is made in marble, so marble and all these material nouns, and we need not consider it as a sub set of common nouns, it is a specific noun.

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Exercise #1

- Identify the noun and the type of the noun.
 - I saw a ship in the distance.
 - Did you meet Arun on your way?
 - He loves music.
 - We eat three meals a day.
 - Tarun usually tells jokes.
 - The boys are on their way out.
 - She loves to wear silk.

Now look at this slide. Identify the noun and the type of the noun. I will read out the sentences for you. This is your exercise. I saw a ship in the distance. Did you meet Arun on your way? He loves music. We eat three meals a day. Tarun usually tells jokes. The boys are on their way out. She loves to wear silk.

Now **I** is a pronoun ship is important here. So, I saw ship here and ship is a noun, which ship I do not know the HSS or the Royal ship or a ship called Mary's Stewart, **I mean not** we do not know which ship is talking about, it is just a ship; it is a common noun. Did you meet Arun on your way? Arun is a proper noun, name of a person. He loves music; 'he' we are using he instead of any one, let us we can also replace it with any proper noun. So, he is pronoun, music is a noun here, common noun. He loves Michael

Jackson's music that becomes a; he loves Karnataka's music that becomes a proper noun.

We eat three meals a day, your meals, we do not say we meal - three meal a day, three meals, it has to be in plural. The common noun, we are not saying which kind of meals. Tarun usually tells jokes, so Tarun is your proper noun. The boys are, so the boys are common noun we are not specifically told which boys. She loves to wear silk; silk is becomes your material noun. And in Tarun sentence, Tarun usually tells jokes; jokes are also common noun. Let us consider possessive nouns. Now, I have already told you it usually takes an apostrophe-s, this is the symbol apostrophe-s and to denote that what belongs to whom. So, we add an apostrophe to singular nouns and to irregular plurals that do not end with an s.

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Now, irregular plural that do not end in an s. Plural of **child is children**; when you say **Children's notebook**, **Children's school** then there is an apostrophe like this. It plural of **child is children**, and then children remain plural, and it does not become children's. Similarly, I can give you more example Jack's car, the college's **trustees**, the boy's playground etcetera.

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Exercise

1. She was surprised by the result of yesterday.
2. I realized I had bought the text book for the first year.
3. He was shocked by the words of his sister.
4. The piano playing of Mark has improved over the years.
5. It's the calendat of the last year.

Now, here is another exercise; this is your second exercise. Please look at this slide. Tell me, whether you should have an apostrophe here or you should be able to change the sentences, I mean I will give you example this is the playground of children. And if you say this is children's playground; obviously, the second one sounds more appropriate. I would like you to take a look at these sentences, and then make changes wherever necessary using an apostrophe form. Please take a look; she was surprised by the result of yesterday. I realized I had bought the textbook for the first year. He was shocked by the words of his sister. The piano playing of Mark has improved over the years. It is the calendar of the last year. What should you do?

Now, let us try to solve these sentences. She was surprised by the result of yesterday; No, yesterday's result that is more accurate and appropriate. I realized I had bought the first year's textbook. He was shocked by his sister's words. Mark's piano playing has improved over the year; **there** not piano playing of mark. And it is last year's calendar; it is the last year's calendar. So, this is the way that you make possessive forms. And again I would suggest that you go back to your high school, Wren and Martin grammar book, and you will find lots of basic explanation for these things. Many at time, we find a student making very serious errors where possessive forms are concerned.

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Reading

1. What were the observations of Doppler radar?
2. What are the strange facts about Mercury's surface?
3. What is unique about Mercury's core?
4. Give meanings of the following:
 - i. Bizarre ii. Zenith iii. resonances

Now, I am going to give you this passage and I have also highlighted some reading for some certain expressions and words for you, we will discuss them. However, before we start and I will read out the passage and you will read it. I will also show you the passage this is not for listening, but this is for reading. So, you please look at the questions first. Before we look at this slide, first look at the questions. The questions are what were the observations of Doppler radar? This is the passage about the planet Mercury. What are the strange facts about Mercury's surface? What is unique about Mercury's core? And then I have, I would like you to consult open your dictionary, consult your dictionary and look up the meaning of the words Bizarre, Zenith, Resonances. So, please pay attention to these questions, note them down and let us move on to do the reading. Please read the slides; please look at the slide carefully.

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- Until 1962 it was thought that Mercury's "day" was the same length as its "year" so as to keep that same face to the Sun much as the Moon does to the Earth. But this was shown to be false in 1965 by Doppler radar observations. It is now known that Mercury rotates three times in two of its years. Mercury is the only body in the solar system known to have an orbital/rotational resonance with a ratio other than 1:1 (though many have no resonances at all). This fact and the high eccentricity of Mercury's orbit would produce very strange effects for an observer on Mercury's surface. At some longitudes the observer would see the Sun rise and then gradually increase in apparent size as it slowly moved toward the zenith. At that point the Sun would stop, briefly reverse course, and stop again before resuming its path toward the horizon and decreasing in apparent size. All the while the stars would be moving three times faster across the sky. Observers at other points on Mercury's surface would see different but equally bizarre motions.

We will read together. Until 1962 it was thought that Mercury's "day" was the same length as its "year" so as to keep that same face to the Sun much as the Moon does to the Earth. But this was shown to be false in 1965 by Doppler radar observations. It is now known that mercury rotates three times in two of its years. Mercury is the only body in the solar system known to have an orbital, rotational resonance with a ratio other than 1 is to 1 though many have no resonances at all. This fact and the high eccentricity of Mercury's orbit would produce very strange effects for an observer **would** on Mercury's surface. At some longitudes the observer would see the Sun rise and then gradually increase in apparent size as it slowly moved toward the zenith. At that point the Sun would stop, briefly reverse course, and stop again before resuming its path toward the horizon and decreasing in apparent size. All the while the stars **w**ould be moving three times faster across the sky. Observers at other points on Mercury's surface would see different, but equally bizarre motions.

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- Mercury's interior is dominated by a large iron core whose radius is 1800 to 1900 km. The silicate outer shell (analogous to Earth's mantle and crust) is only 500 to 600 km thick. At least some of the core is probably molten. Measurements from the Messenger spacecraft show Mercury's magnetic field is approximately three times stronger in the northern hemisphere than the southern hemisphere and has led to breakthrough research. Modeling by Hao Cao, a UCLA postdoctoral scholar working in the lab of Christopher Russell after considering many factors, including how fast Mercury rotates and the chemistry and complex motion of fluid inside the planet show the magnetic field of Mercury works differently than it does on Earth.

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We will go back to the questions. What were the observations of Doppler radar, and here is your answer. See the answer is little bit complex here. You have to give a write it in your own words, until 1962 it was thought that Mercury's "day" look at the way apostrophe is used here. We are not saying day of mercury, but Mercury's day was the same length as it is years so as to keep that same face to the Sun much as the Moon does to the Earth, but then Doppler radar observations showed this believe to be false that is the answer.

What are the strange facts about Mercury's surface, that is your next question and then

you have to talk about the high eccentricity of Mercury's orbit that produces very strange effects for an observer on Mercury's surface. So, answer is given somewhere in the preceding lines. What is unique about Mercury's cores, this is answer is given here; Mercury's interior is dominated by a large iron core whose radius is so much the silicate outer shell is only 500 to this, at least some of the core is probably molten. So, answer lies somewhere here, and you have to give answer in your own language, in your own words. See, you are doing language, so you should be able to not change the facts, but try to bring some variety to the sentences structure.

Of course, you cannot do much about the vocabulary, the jargon - the scientific jargon and the facts, but you can always do something about the, you do not have **to** use the exact language to express yourself which is given in the text. Meanings of the following, I hope that you are looking and also try to understand some meanings from the context also in what context these words occur. This is your exercise, your homework.

We will move on to another topic now, which is now countable nouns; we have been talking about countable uncountable nouns. So, countable nouns are for things that we can count using numbers; 2 cameras, 3 computers, 6 chairs, we can count them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and an infinite. Countable nouns have a singular and plural form. So, 1 table, 2 tables; the singular form can use the determiner a or an. So, I have a pen and I have an umbrella. So, this is the way you use a, an. If you want to ask about the quantity of a countable noun, you ask how many and not how much and they that is combined with the plural countable noun.

Uncountable nouns, on the other hand of for things that we cannot count with numbers; so it is a little bit complicated and it is not to be confused with abstract noun, but there are several things that cannot be that do not use the countable form of at all. So, they remain uncountable nouns. They may be the names of abstract ideas or qualities are for physical objects that are too small or too amorphous to be counted, now let us say water, let us say powder or gas. So, these things cannot be really counted; at the same time there are not abstract nouns also, they are not feelings. But at the same time, you can say liquids, but you cannot count them. You cannot say how many liquids how many gasses, you can give some **quantity**, but you cannot give the number here, **quantity of the**

further therefore, they remain uncountable. Uncountable nouns are used with the singular verb; they usually do not have plural form.

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- Jewelry /poetry
- Accommodation/ Camping
- Clothing
- Equipment/violence
- Evidence/news
- Furniture/music
- Health

I will give you this list look at this list of words and these are the words that remain the way they are, no matter how much you have of these. So, jewelry, poetry, it never becomes jewelries and poetries. Accommodation yet another very common word that is very often mistaken as accommodations in plurals, there is no such thing it remains the accommodation one or two. Camping is camping, clothing – clothing, equipment, violence they do not have plural form. Evidence, news, furniture, music, health, they are all uncountable nouns they do not take any plural forms to them. We continue look at the slide.

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- Pain/pleasure
- Snow/rain
- Noise/Success
- Shopping/sightseeing
- Information/Education

Pain, pleasure, snow, rain, noise, success, shopping, sightseeing, we do not say we went for several sightseeing's in London, we went for shopping's in America, we do not talk like that. So, shopping and sightseeing no matter how much you do that. Information and education these are also not countable nouns. Please make a note of this list.

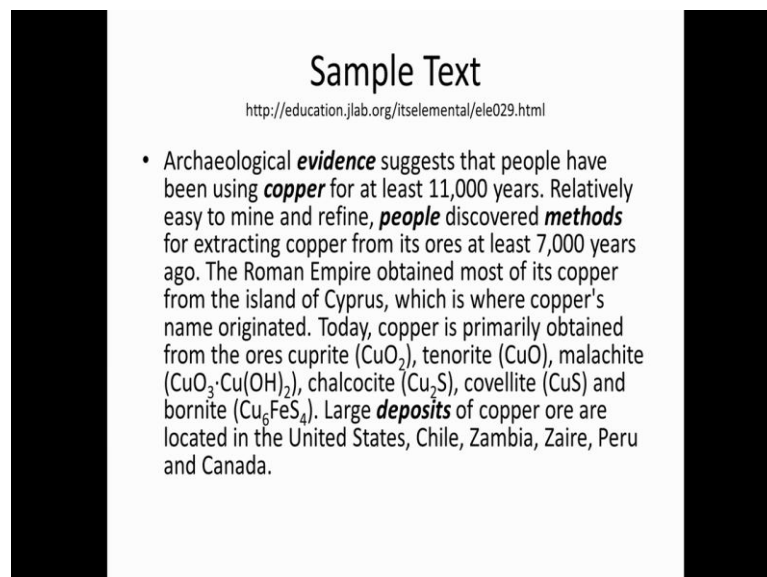
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Exercise #2

- Identify the following nouns as countable or uncountable.
 - Flower
 - Magazines
 - Tea
 - Milk
 - Lemon
 - Butter
 - Eggs

Now here is an exercise take a look. I would like you to identify the following nouns as countable or uncountable nouns. So, Flower, flower can be counted. So, we have flowers; we also say bouquet of flower, but that is a collective noun that is a different matter. Magazines, yes magazine, it remains and it is a countable; we can count 1, 2, 3, 4. Tea, no, we cannot count tea is an uncountable noun. Milk, no, we cannot count milk. Lemon, lemon can be counted; we can say lemons. We can count eggs, but we cannot count butter, butter is an uncountable noun. Quantity, yes, quantity of tea, milk, butter possible, but not we cannot make plurals of them.

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Sample Text
<http://education.jlab.org/itselemental/ele029.html>

- Archaeological **evidence** suggests that people have been using **copper** for at least 11,000 years. Relatively easy to mine and refine, **people** discovered **methods** for extracting copper from its ores at least 7,000 years ago. The Roman Empire obtained most of its copper from the island of Cyprus, which is where copper's name originated. Today, copper is primarily obtained from the ores cuprite (Cu_2O), tenorite (CuO), malachite ($\text{Cu}_2\text{O} \cdot \text{Cu}(\text{OH})_2$), chalcocite (Cu_2S), covellite (CuS) and bornite (Cu_5FeS_4). Large **deposits** of copper ore are located in the United States, Chile, Zambia, Zaire, Peru and Canada.

Now here is a text sample text I would like you to take a look at this sample text, and we are looking at the countable and uncountable nouns here. Please read the text along with me and some of the words are highlighted for your own understanding that there are certain words that cannot be used in plural, there are uncountable. So, archaeological **evidence** suggests that people have been using **copper**. (copper is a metal, it does not become coppers) for at least 11,000 years. Relatively easy to mine and refine, **people** discovered **methods** for extracting copper from its ores at least 7,000 years ago. The Roman Empire obtained most of its copper from the island of Cyprus, which is where copper's name originated. Today, copper is primarily obtained from the ores cuprite, tenorite, malachite, chalcocite, covellite and bornite. Large **deposits**, now one deposits,

several deposits, so countable, uncountable of copper; ore are located in the United States, Chile, Zambia, Zaire, Peru and Canada.

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- Used in large amounts by the electrical industry in the form of wire, copper is second only to *silver* in electrical conductance. Since it resists corrosion from the *air*, moisture and seawater, copper has been widely used in coins. Although once made nearly entirely from copper, American *pennies* are now made from *zinc* that has been coated with copper. Copper is also used to make water *pipes* and *jewelry*, as well as other items.

Used in large amounts by the electrical industry in the form of wire, copper is second only to *silver* in electrical conductance. Since it resists corrosion from the *air*, (we do not say airs; it is air.) moisture and seawater, copper has been widely used in coins. Although once made nearly entirely from copper, American *pennies* are now made from *zinc* (one penny; several pennies) *are now made from zinc* that has been coated with copper. Copper is also used to make water *pipes* and *jewelry*, as well as other items.

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- People first learned about 5,000 years ago that copper can be strengthened if it is mixed with other metals. The two most familiar **alloys** of copper are bronze and brass. The **Romans** were the first to make extensive use of brass, using it to make such things as **coins**, **kettles** and ornamental **objects**. Today, brass is also used in some musical **instruments**, **screws** and other hardware that must resist corrosion.

People first learned about 5,000 years ago that copper can be strengthened if it is mixed with other metals. The two most familiar **alloys**, (so one alloy and many alloys) of copper are bronze and brass. The **Romans** (they are people, they are **the** people from particular nation, so they can be used in plurals; the Indians, the Romans, the Afghans) were the first to make extensive use of brass, using it to make such things as coins, **kettles** and ornamental **objects**. All these are common nouns they can be and which can be used in as plurals. Today, brass is also used in some musical **instruments**, **screws** and other hardware that must resist corrosion. We have to look at these words highlighted; understand which can be used in plural and which cannot, alright.

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Exercise

- It's making something glittering and *beautiful*. It's creating a sparkling *necklace* or a pair of earrings. It's designing and manufacturing jewelry to your heart's content--while making profits at the same time. Sometimes [jewelry entrepreneurs] try to go too big, too fast," says Ann Barber, director of membership benefits at the [National Craft Association](#), a professional trade association in Rochester, New York, for the arts and crafts industry. The world of jewelry *design* is rife with options. In terms of what's hot, be aware of the fashion trends in your area. Edelstein notes that upcoming jewelry trends include a return to yellow gold (a rollback from the all-white *gold* and diamond phenomenon) and the addition of lots of color. Beads, stiletto earrings and layered necklaces are also becoming popular.

Now, here is an exercise, look at it. My question is what you are suppose to do is that whatever words are highlighted here, you have to tell me whether they can be used in plural or not. It is making something glittering and **beautiful**. It is creating, look at the use of possessive noun here; it is creating a sparkling **necklace** or a pair of earrings. It is designing and manufacturing **jewelry** to your heart's content--while making profits at the same time. Sometimes, jewelry entrepreneurs try to go too big, too fast, says Ann Barber, director or membership benefits at the National Craft Association, a professional trade association in Rochester, New York, for the arts and crafts industry. The world of jewelry **design** is rife with options. In terms of **what's is** hot, be aware of the fashion trends in your area. Edelstein notes that upcoming jewelry trends include a return to yellow gold - a rollback from the all-white **gold** and diamond phenomenon and the addition of lots of color. Beads, stiletto earrings and layered necklaces are also becoming popular.

So, whatever I have highlighted, please tell me whether they can be turn into singular, plural form or not.

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- Beautiful: beautiful
- Necklace: necklaces
- Jewelry: jewelry
- Design: designs
- Gold: golds
- Diamond: diamonds

Plural of 'gold' is 'gold'; in some cases, it is 'gold'

Take a moment. And your answer is, so I had highlighted beautiful, it remains beautiful, it is an abstract noun, it is an adjective of course, but beauty is an abstract noun. So, beautiful adjective, and it cannot be beautifuls so let it be. Necklace - one necklace, several necklaces, so necklaces. Jewelry remains jewelry, not jewelries. Design - one design, several designs, yes. Gold – gold's; Diamonds – diamonds; gold – gold's, yes, there are certain words; the metal that can be turn into plural forms.

Before I end, again we are going to do some idioms and expressions that may add some variety where add IT to your language and keeping in with today's topic all are related to the word gold. So, I am giving you a list of idioms, and you may use your dictionary online or actually physical dictionary, and tell me what do these words mean. Try to enhance your own vocabulary.

So, first word, first expression a part of gold; at the end of the rainbow, apart of gold, at the end of the rainbow, second word gold digger, next going for the gold, as good as gold next one as good as gold, next one strike gold, and the last one worth someone's weight in gold w e i g h t. So, I will repeat a part of gold, gold digger, going for the gold, as good as gold, strike gold, and worth someone's weight in gold. Use your dictionaries try to understand the meaning of these idiom and expressions.

Thank you very much.

Tags

Reading English, English for Engineers, English words, English Exercise, Exercises in English, Grammar usage, English Grammar, vocabulary, words and phrases, spoken communication, written communication, English writing, English speaking, scientific English, report writing, CV, formal letter, Speech-Preposition, Noun Phrases, Countable and uncountable nouns, singular, plural

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