



FREE RESOURCE · GRAMMAR

There is, there are

Use **there is** before a singular or uncountable noun and **there are** before a plural noun to say that something exists: There is a park near my house. There are two hospitals in the city. In the past, use **there was** and **there were**. The verb agrees with the noun that follows.

What to know

What **there is** and **there are** mean

We use **there is** and **there are** to say that something exists or to introduce something new. The word **there** is not a place here. It is only a starting word, and the real subject comes after the verb.

- *There is a library on my street.* · singular
- *There are many parks in the city.* · plural
- *There is a lot of traffic in the morning.* · uncountable

Singular, plural and uncountable

Use **there is** with a singular noun (a bridge) and with an uncountable noun (water, traffic, pollution, advice, information). Use **there are** with plurals (two bridges, many problems, several reasons).

Negatives and questions

For negatives, add **not**: There is not a park here, or the short forms **there isn't** and **there aren't**. You can also use **no**: There is no park here. With **any**, use **not**: There aren't any buses at night.

Other tenses and modals

Change the verb **be** to change the time: **there was, there were** (past), **there has been, there have been** (present perfect), **there will be** (future), **there is going to be** (plan or evidence) and **there must be, there might be, there could be** (guesses).

There is or it is?

Use **there is** to say that something exists for the first time. Use **it is** to describe something that you have already mentioned. There is a new park near my house. It is large and very quiet.

Exercises

1. _____ a park near my house.
 - a. There are
 - b. There is
 - c. Has
2. _____ many tourists in the city in summer.
 - a. There are
 - b. There is
 - c. There has

3. There _____ a lot of traffic in the centre.
- a. were
 - b. is
 - c. are
4. _____ any buses after midnight?
- a. Is there
 - b. Are there
5. Yesterday _____ a long queue outside the library.
- a. there is
 - b. there were
 - c. there was
6. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) In my hometown (2) have (3) a large (4) shopping centre.
7. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) There (2) is (3) many people (4) in the library.
8. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): for / are / reasons / trend. / this / is / There / several
9. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): a / near / here? / Are / Is / bank / there
10. Correct this: *There is many problems in big cities.*

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/there-is-there-are/practice/

IELTS tip. There is and there are are very useful for describing places in Speaking Part 2 and introducing arguments in Writing Task 2. Check the noun after the verb every time: singular or uncountable takes is, plural takes are. Replace some of them with other structures so that your sentences do not all begin in the same way.

FOR TEACHERS · GRAMMAR

There is, there are

AIM	Learners use there is and there are with correct agreement in all common forms and to describe places and introduce arguments.
TIME	25 minutes
LEVEL	B1 to B2 (IELTS 5 to 6.5)
MATERIALS	This worksheet, one copy per learner; the free online practice for the audio

Warm-up

Show a photo of a busy street and ask learners to list what is in it in one minute, giving examples with there is and there are on the board.

Lesson steps

1. Present singular, plural and uncountable examples and elicit the rule for agreement.
2. Drill negatives and questions with a picture description pair task (Is there a...? Are there any...?).
3. Practise past and future forms by comparing a photo of the city now with an imagined city in 2050.
4. Contrast there is with have and with it is through a short error-fixing task.
5. Learners write a description of their hometown with at least six there is or there are sentences.

Extension

Learners write a Task 2 introduction that uses there are several reasons and there is a clear solution, then peer-check the agreement.

Answer key

1. b) There is. A park is singular, so use there is.
2. a) There are. Tourists is plural, so use there are.
3. b) is. Traffic is uncountable, so the verb is is.
4. b) Are there. Buses is plural, so use are there.
5. c) there was. A queue is singular and yesterday is past, so use there was.
6. Part 2: *have* → **there is**. To say that something exists, use there is with a singular noun.
7. Part 2: *is* → **are**. People is plural, so use there are.
8. There are several reasons for this trend. Reasons is plural, so the verb is are.
9. Is there a bank near here? In a question, is comes before there.
10. There are many problems in big cities. Problems is plural, so use are.

Questions learners often ask

When do I use there is and when there are? Use there is with singular and uncountable nouns, and there are with plural nouns. The verb agrees with the noun that comes after it.

What is the difference between there is and it is? There is introduces something new. It is describes something already mentioned or identified.

Can I say in my town have a park? No. Say there is a park in my town, or my town has a park.

How do I use there with the past or future? Use there was or there were for the past, there will be for the future, and there has been or there have been for the present perfect.

Sources

- Swan, M. (2016). Practical English Usage, 4th edition. Oxford University Press.
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (2006). Cambridge Grammar of English. Cambridge University Press.

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