

One and ones

A

We can use **one** instead of repeating a singular countable noun and **ones** instead of repeating a plural noun when it is clear from the context what we are talking about:

- 'Can I get you a drink?' 'It's okay, I've already got **one**.' (= a drink)
- I think his best poems are his early **ones**. (= poems)

We don't use **one / ones** instead of an uncountable noun:

- If you need any more paper, I'll bring you some. (*not* ... I'll bring you one / ones.)
- I asked him to get apple juice, but he got orange. (*not* ... but he got orange one / ones.)

We can't use **ones** without defining precisely which group of things we are talking about. Instead, we use **some**. Compare:

- 'We need new curtains.' 'Okay, let's buy *green ones* this time. / ... *ones with flowers on* / ... *those ones*.' and
- 'We need new curtains.' 'Okay, let's buy **some**.' (*not* Okay, let's buy ones.)

B

We don't use **one / ones** after nouns used as adjectives:

- I thought my memory stick was in my trouser pocket, but it was in my **coat** pocket. (*not* ... my coat one.)

Instead of using **one / ones** after possessive determiners (**my, your, her**, etc.) we prefer **mine, yours, hers**, etc. However, a possessive determiner + **one / ones** is often heard in informal speech:

- I'd really like a smartphone like **yours**. (*or* '... like your one' in informal speech)

We usually use **ones** to refer to things rather than people:

- We need two people to help. We could ask those men over there. (*not* ... ask those ones ...)

However, **ones** is more likely to be used in comparative sentences to refer to groups of people:

- Older students seem to work harder than younger **ones**. (*or* ... than younger students.)

Note also that we use **ones** to refer to people in **the little ones** (= small children), **(your) loved ones** (= usually close family), **(one of) the lucky ones**.

C

We can leave out **one / ones** –

☆ after **which**:

- When we buy medicines, we have no way of knowing *which* (**ones**) contain sugar.

☆ after superlatives:

- Look at that pumpkin! It's the *biggest* (**one**) I've seen this year.

☆ after **this, that, these, and those**:

- The last test I did was quite easy, but some parts of *this* (**one**) are really difficult.
- Help yourself to grapes. *These* (**ones**) are the sweetest, but *those* (**ones**) taste best. (Note that some people think 'those / these ones' is incorrect, particularly in formal English.)

☆ after **either, neither, another, each, the first / second / last**, (etc.):

- Karl pointed to the paintings and said I could take *either* (**one**). (*or* ... either of them.)
- She cleared away the cups, washed *each* (**one**) thoroughly, and put them on the shelf.

D

We don't leave out **one / ones** –

☆ after **the, the only, the main, and every**:

- When you cook clams you shouldn't eat *the* **ones** that have broken shells.
- After I got the glasses home, I found that *every* **one** was broken.

☆ after adjectives:

- My shoes were so uncomfortable that I had to go out today and buy some *new* **ones**.

However, after colour adjectives we can often leave out **one / ones** in answers:

- 'Have you decided which jumper to buy?' 'Yes, I think I'll take the *blue* (**one**).'

Exercises

61.1 If necessary, correct these sentences. If they are already correct, write ✓. (A)

1. Bilal brought in the wood and put ones on the fire.
2. Normally I don't like wearing a scarf, but it was so cold I put one on.
3. A: We've run out of potatoes. B: I'll get ones when I go to the shops.
4. We haven't got lemon tea, but you could have mint one instead.
5. Those aren't your gloves. You must have picked up the wrong ones.
6. A: What kind of cakes do you like best? B: Ones with cream inside.
7. I couldn't fit all the boxes in the car, so I had to leave ones behind and pick it up later.
8. Most of the trees in our garden are less than ten years old but ones are much older than that.

61.2 If appropriate, replace the italicised words or phrases with one or ones. If it is not possible or unlikely, write 'No' after the sentence. (A & B)

1. I answered most of the questions, but had to miss out some very difficult *questions*.
2. The female violinists in the orchestra outnumber the male *violinists* by about three to one.
3. He used to work for a finance company, but he's moved to an insurance *company*.
4. The issue discussed at the meeting was an extremely complicated *issue*.
5. Many people are happy about the new road being built, but there are some angry *people*, too.
6. A: Was it these earrings you wanted? B: No, the *earrings* on the left of those, please.
7. Diana is really good at taking photos of old buildings. There's an excellent *photo* of a local church in her office.
8. A: Are you picking Jo up at the train station? B: No, she's arriving at the bus *station*.
9. On one channel was a war film and on the other was a horror *film*, so I turned the TV off.
10. There are lots of gloves here. Are these your *gloves*?

61.3 If the italicised one or ones can be omitted in these sentences, put brackets around it. If not, write ✓. (C & D)

1. The children had eaten all the pizza and were still hungry so I had to make them another (*one*).
2. I drove around the houses, looking for the *ones* with 'For Sale' notices outside. ✓
3. I'm not keen on those *ones* with the cherry on top. I think I'll have a chocolate biscuit instead.
4. I like both of these jackets. I don't know which *one* to choose.
5. The vases are all handmade and every *one* looks different.
6. Each winter seemed to be colder than the last *one*.
7. There are many excellent food markets in town but the main *one* is near the port.
8. She tried on lots of pairs of shoes and finally chose the purple *ones*.
9. The books were so disorganised that I soon lost track of which *ones* I had already counted.
10. Can you remember where you bought this *one*? I'd like to get one myself.

61.4 Complete these sentences with one or ones followed by an ending of your own. (C & D)

1. Carmen drove to the restaurant because she was the only ...

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2. To help keep fit, go to shops you can walk or cycle to rather than ...

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3. A number of causes of climate change have been suggested, but the main ...

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4. Camera tripods come in a variety of sizes and materials, but the most convenient ...

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