

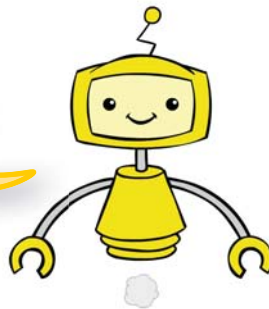
# These nouns are classified

**LINKS TO:**

Stage 2, Module 13

Learning Object 2: Talk about chocolate

What's all this hullabaloo about classified nouns? You can't keep a secret from me! One way or another, I'll get to the bottom of this!



## Classifiers

1

### What are classifiers?

In Indonesian, classifiers are words that are used to group things according to shape, size, number, and so on. They are similar in usage to collective nouns that are used in English. For example, you are all familiar with the use of the following:

- a **flock** of sheep
- a **herd** of cattle
- a **school** of fish
- a **murder** of crows.

In Indonesian there are three main classifiers:

- ➔ These are:
- **orang** (used for people)
  - **buah** (used for most objects)
  - **ekor** (used for animals)

The classifier for animals, *ekor*, means 'tail' and is based on the premise that all animals have a tail; however, it does include those animals that are without tails.

### Using classifiers

In Indonesian, the use of classifiers is optional. In writing, the use of classifiers raises the level of formality of the written text. However, overuse of classifiers in writing can make the text look and sound artificially constructed and contrived. We attach the prefix **se-** to a classifier if there is only **one** person, object or animal. In this situation the classifier takes on the role of the indefinite article 'a' in English.

➔ For example:  
*seorang polisi*                      a police officer  
*sebuah rumah*                      a house  
*seekor kucing*                      a cat

If there is more than one person, object or animal, a count noun (number) precedes the classifier.

➔ For example:  
*Orang kaya itu mempunyai sepuluh buah mobil mewah.*  
 That wealthy person owns **ten** luxury cars.

In spoken language, classifiers can be used in most informal situations. Note the following dialogue at a traditional market between a chicken seller and a customer:

Penjual:            *Maunya berapa ekor?*  
 How many (chickens) do you want?  
 Pembeli:           *Dua ekor saja!*  
 Just two!

Did you notice that the actual animal (*ayam*) was not mentioned and only the classifier *ekor* was used? This is common in spoken language when the type of animal is already apparent in the context of the situation.

### Note:

Generally, classifiers should be used sparingly and appropriately. If they do not add to the meaning of the text, they should be left out.

## 2

## Classify this ...

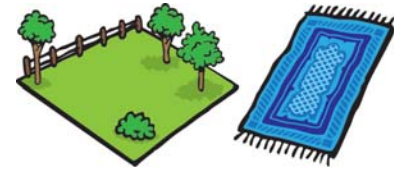
There are many subclassifiers that are derived from the general classifier for objects, *buah*. The following list is by no means exhaustive and you will notice that there is some overlap in function. For instance, the subclassifiers *helai*, *lembar* and *carik* can all be used with *kertas*, which is 'paper'.



**batang:** used for cylindrical objects such as pipes, tree trunks, pencils and cigarettes, and for items that come in bars, such as chocolate.



**bentuk:** used for round and curved objects, such as rings and bracelets.



**bidang:** used for flat, spread out things, such as a block of land.



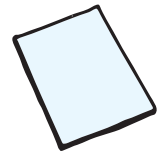
**patah:** used for words.



**helai:** used for flat things, such as paper, cloth and leaves.



**kaki:** used for umbrellas.



**carik:** used for paper.



**lembar:** used for flat things, such as paper and photographs.



**bilah:** used for sharp items, such as knives.



**biji:** used for small, round objects, such as seeds or eggs.



**pucuk:** used with guns and letters.

As you can see from the final example, *pucuk*, there is often little logic to the different types of objects represented by a particular classifier. After all, what do letters and guns have in common?

## 3

## Exercises

## Exercise 1

Read the following text and complete the accompanying activities.

Bapak dan Ibu Smart mempunyai dua orang anak kembar, seorang anak laki-laki dan seorang anak perempuan. Anna dan Peter Smart berumur limabelas tahun. Bapak Smart adalah seorang insinyur dan Ibu Smart adalah seorang pelukis dan ibu rumah tangga.

Keluarga Smart tinggal di sebuah kompleks apartemen mewah, di kawasan Jakarta Barat. Apartemen keluarga Smart besar dan luas. Apartemen itu berkamar tidur tiga buah, berkamar mandi dua buah, berkamar duduk sebuah dan berkamar makan sebuah.

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**2.2** Did you use any classifiers in the letter you wrote to Anna's friend in Australia? Discuss and justify your language choices, in English.

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