Dan
Hi, I’m Dan from BBC Learning English and today I’m going to tell you something about collective nouns.

Collective nouns are often called group nouns. That is because they represent a number of things together. Examples are: government, family and team.

So, what’s the big deal?

The special thing about these collective nouns is that they can be singular or plural.

If you consider your family to be a group of individuals, then the pronoun is they and the verb is plural. My family are happy.

But your family can also be considered as a single unit, a machine that all works together. In this case, the pronoun is it and the verb is singular. My family is happy.

This does not apply to all collective nouns, so be careful. Police and staff are always plural.