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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.