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Chris: Hello and welcome to Question and Answer of the week, the programme where we answer your questions about learning English. I'm Chris and with me today in the studio is Helen.

Helen: Hi Chris.

Chris: This week we've had a question sent to us from Chengtao, who writes: "I'm confused with the word 'content'. I don't know when I should use the singular or the plural form. For example, 'a book has *content* at the beginning of the book' or 'a book has *contents* at the beginning of the book'. Which one is right?"

Helen: 同学问单词 *content* 和 *contents* 应该怎么用? 什么时候可以用不可数名词, 什么时候用可数名词? Thank you for your question Chengtao. So *content* or *contents* – which one should she use?

Chris: At the beginning of a book you usually have a summary page which outlines the sections or chapters – this is called the table of contents. It is used in the plural form because it refers to some specific things contained within the book.

Helen: 一般在图书的第一页, 我们都会看到 *the table of contents* 这就是这本书的目录, 在这里是复数形式 *contents*, 因为这是特指这本书里所包括的内容。

Chris: So we can use the plural form 'contents' when referring to specific things contained within an object; for example, the contents of a bottle or a box.

Helen: So I can say to you I have an apple, a chocolate bar and a sandwich – they are the contents of my lunchbox.

Chris: That's right.

Helen: When should you use the singular form, 'content'?

Chris: You can use the uncountable noun 'content' when talking about a more general concept. For example, if we talk about the BBC Learning English website, we can say that the content of the website helps people to learn English.

- Helen:** 我们在谈论一些一般概念时，可以用不可数名词 **content**, 也就是内容的意思。
- Chris:** When talking about the amount of a substance, we can use the singular form as well. For example, your fizzy drink has a high sugar content.
- Helen:** 我们已可以在谈论所包括的某一个内容或物质时用不可数名词 **content**.
- Chris:** You can use the word as an adjective as well. If you are satisfied or pleased about something, you can say that you are content.
- Helen:** 别忘了，**content** 也可以作为形容词，发音有所不同，注意了是 **content**, 意思是感觉很充实。
- Chris:** Yes, there's a change in stress in the word. Listen carefully to these examples:

Inserts

My mother kept the contents of the letter secret for 30 years.

Mary was content with her birthday present.

The film was given an 18 certificate because of its adult content.

- Chris:** Well, I hope you're content with the content of this podcast.
- Helen:** I'm very content with the content in today's show.
- Chris:** Don't forget, you can send us an email with your questions. What is the address, Helen?
- Helen:** 我们的邮箱是 questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk.
- Chris:** Until next time, goodbye!
- Helen:** Bye!