

## Definite Article

It is assumed that the basic rules for the uses of articles are already known before studying these following.

**A. Classes**

This is one way to refer to classes, and is perhaps more formal than using a plural:

- **The** tiger is threatened with extinction.

**B. National groups**

**Groups as a whole:**

- **The** French eat in restaurants more than **the** English.

Single examples are not formed in the same way:

- **a** Frenchman / woman, **an** Englishman / woman

**C. Other groups**

If these are clearly plural:

- **the** Social Democrats, **the** Rolling Stones

**D. Unique objects**

- **the** moon, **the** sun

Note that there are other suns and moons in the universe.

- This planet has **a** small moon.

**E. Titles**

These tend to be unique.

- **the** director of studies...

If the title is post-modified (*has a description coming after the noun*), **the** is more likely, but not essential. Compare:

- She became *president* in 2008.

- She became (**the**) *president* of the country in 2008.

**F. Other titles**

**The** may be part of the title, and so is capitalized.

**Newspapers:** **The** Independent / **The** Sunday Times / **The** Financial Times

**G. Musical instruments**

- Jane plays **the** flute. (in general)

- **The** guitar is my favourite instrument. (in general)

It is, of course, still possible to use an indefinite article when we refer to an object.

- There was **a** small brown flute in the window of the shop.

**H. Emphatic use**

The article is heavily stressed and **emphasizes** the noun that follows.

- This hotel is **the** place to stay.

**I. Geographical names**

The following use **the**:

**Rivers:** **the** Thames, the Seine, the Mekong River,...

**Mountain ranges:** **the** Alps, **the** Himalayas

**Oceans:** **the** Mediterranean

**Unique features:** **the** Channel **the** Arctic

**Compass points / areas:** **the** East => **the** Middle East

**Countries:** collective or plural: **The** United Kingdom, **The** Netherlands

This does not apply to:

**Mountain peaks:** Everest (but **The** Matterhorn)

**Lakes:** Lake Geneva

**Continents:** Asia, Europe, Africa, America

**Countries:** France, Germany, Vietnam,...

The definite article is sometimes used before *Lebanon* and *Gambia*:

**The** Lebanon **The** Gambia

**J. Place names**

Post-modification, especially with ... **of**... plays a role in place names.

Compare:

- Leeds University / **The** University of Leeds

- London Bridge / **The** Tower of London

- Canvey Island / **The** Isle of Man

If the first part of a place-name is another name, then we **do not use an article**.

- Browns Restaurant

- **The** Garden House Hotel / **the** Loch Ness monster

**K. Most (of) and the most**

When **most** refers to the largest part of something, it has no article in front.

- Most delegates / most of **the** delegates, more than 75% in fact, were in favour of the proposal

When **most** refers to the largest number or amount compared to all the other people or things, it **can be used with an article**.

- Paula Thompson received (**the**) most votes.

- During **the** road tests, this car used (**the**) most petrol.

**L. Importance of context**

The definite article is used to refer to already mentioned items, and so its use depends on context.

- **The** Smiths had a son and a daughter. **The** son was in **the** Army and **the** daughter was training to be a doctor.

- **The** first week of our holiday was awful. On **the** Saturday there was a terrible storm.

Here, **the Saturday** refers to a day in a period of time already mentioned.

- On **the** Saturday of that week ...

## Indefinite Article

**A. Jobs**

Compare: Tony is **a** builder. Tony was **the** builder of that house.

**B. In measuring**

- Three times **a** week. Fifty kilometres **an** hour.

- £3.50 **a** kilo / £15,000 **a** year

Formally, **per** can replace **a** / **an**.

- She was convicted of driving at more than 120 kilometres *per* hour.

### C. Unknown people

Use of **a** / **an** emphasizes that a person is unknown.

- A Mr Jones called while you were out.

### Zero Article

#### A. Names

Compare:

- Matthew Smith is one of my favourite artists. (a person)

- A Matthew Smith hangs in their bedroom. (a painting by Matthew Smith)

● Some unique organizations do not use **the**.

- Parliament, but **The** (House of) Commons

#### B. Streets

Most streets do not use an article.

*Green Road Godwin Street*

Common exceptions are:

**The High Street The Strand**

and street names without preceding adjectives. Compare:

*Holly Drive / The Drive*

#### Translation problems

Study these sentences.

- *I really like **rugby**.*

- *I was holding it in my **hand**.*

- *Alex has **flu**.*

- *I'd like **a pound and a half of cheese**.*

- *It's **a film** about homeless people.*

- *I've got **a headache**.*

### PRACTICE

#### I. Complete the text with **a** / **an** or **the**, or write - if no article is needed.

It has been announced that for (1)...**the**...third consecutive month there has been (2).....rise in (3).....number of (4).....people unemployed, rather than (5).....fall that had been predicted. (6).....rise was blamed on (7).....continuing uncertainty over (8).....government economic policy, and couldn't come at (9).....worse time for (10).....prime minister, who is facing (11).....growing criticism over (12).....way (13).....present crisis is being handled. (14).....MPs are increasingly voicing (15).....fears that despite (16).....recent reduction of (17).....business taxes and cuts in (18) .....interest rates, (19).....government still expects (20).....recovery of the economy to take three or even four years. To make (21).....matters worse, (22).....number of small businesses going into (23).....liquidation is still at (24).....record level, and (25).....

housing market is showing no signs of recovery. Some backbenchers expect (26) .....general election before (27).....end of (28).....winter unless there is (29)..... rapid change of (30).....fortune.

#### II. Underline the best options to complete each sentence. A dash (-) means that no article is needed.

1. Helen doesn't like **the** / - cream cakes sold in **a** / **the** local bakery.
2. **The** / - handball is fast becoming **a** / **the** popular sport worldwide.
3. We could see that **the** / - Alps were covered in **the** / - snow.
4. It's **a** / - long time since I met **a** / - lovely person like you!
5. Carol has **a** / - degree in **the** / - engineering from **the** / - University of London. .
6. At **the** / - present moment, **the** / - man seems to have the / an uncertain future.
7. **The** / - problem for **the** / - today's students is how to survive financially.
8. **The** / - French enjoy spending holidays in **the** / - countryside.
9. Please do not turn on **a** / **the** water-heater in **a** / **the** bathroom.
10. Sue bought **a** / **the** Picasso I was telling you about **the** / - last week.

#### III. Correct the errors in these sentences.

1. It's not a first-class accommodation unless it has a private bathroom.  
*It's not first-class accomodation unless it has a separate bathroom.*
2. On this record twins play piano duet.
3. The halfway through meal we realized what waiter had said.
4. If the Mrs Hillier phones, say I'm away on trip.
5. There is a wonderful scenery in eastern part of Turkey.
6. Cocker spaniel is one of most popular pet dogs.
7. There is going to be fog and a cold weather all the next week.
8. I spent very interesting holiday at the Lake Coniston in England.
9. We are against war in general, so of course we are against war like this between superpower and developing country.
10. The burglaries are definitely on increase.

#### IV. Complete each sentence with **a** / **an** or **the**, or write - if no article is needed.

1. Fm going to stand for Parliament at....**the**....next election.
2. When I left.....station, I had to stand in.....queue for.....taxi for.....long time.
3. We took..... rip around London and saw.....Tower Bridge.
4. ....happiness of the majority depends on.....hard work for everyone.
5. ....most main roads in this part of.....country follow.....line of.....roads built by.....Romans.
6. Have you got.....the new album by.....Anxious Frogs?
7. If I had.....time, I would like to take up.....archery.
8. We spent.....pleasant evening having.....meal at.....Pizza Pan restaurant.
9. ....Nile flows right through.....city.
10. ....summer I spent in.....USA was one of.....best in my life.

#### V. Complete each sentence with **a** / **an** or **the**, or write - if no article is needed.

1. She was...**the**...first woman to cross.....Atlantic in.....canoe.
2. Go down.....High Street and turn right in to.....Mill Road.
3. Please let me carry.....shopping. It's.....least I can do.
4. I don't like.....milk in.....coffee.
5. At.....end of.....busy day,.....sleep is.....best tonic.

6. ....James Joyce I knew wasn't.....novelist and wasn't.....Irish either.
7. Well go for.....walk if .....sun comes out.
8. This is.....last time I do you.....favour for a while.
9. I'm staying in.....Hilton so you can leave me.....message.
10. Jim became.....furniture salesman after losing.....first job he had.

**VI. There are 10 incorrect uses of the in the following text. Underline them.**

Word processing and the calculator are without a shadow of doubt here to stay, and in the many respects our lives are the much richer for them. But the teachers and other academics are claiming that we are now starting to feel the first significant wave of their effects on a generation of the users. It seems nobody under the age of 20 can spell or add up any more. Even several professors at leading universities have commented on the detrimental effect the digital revolution has had on the most intelligent young minds in the country.

At the root of one part of the problem, evidently, lies the automatic spellcheck now widely available on the word processing software. Professor John Silver of the Sydney University, Australia, said: 'Why should we bother to learn how to spell correctly, or for that matter to learn even the most basic of the mathematical sums, when at the press of a button we have our problem answered for us? The implications are enormous. Will the adults of the future look to the computer to make the decisions for them, to tell them who to marry or what kind of the house to buy? Are we heading for a future individual incapable of the independent human thought?'

**VII.**

1. Please watch....**the**...cabin attendant as she demonstrates.....use of.....oxygen mask.
2. Paul spent.....half of his life in.....Far East
3. You have to use at.....least.....pint and.....half of milk.
4. Dick has..... sore throat and is taking.....medicine.
5. We arranged.....accommodation on .....outskirts of.....city.
6. There is .....very difficult crossword in.....*Times*.
7. Could you give me.....information Tasked for in.....letter I sent you?
8. I bought..... jewellery for my sister but it wasn't .....kind she likes.
9. I always wanted to be.....astronaut but.....ambition wore off.
10. And.....last of all, don't forget to put.....cat out for.....night.

**VIII. Underline the best options to complete the sentence. A dash (-) means that no article is needed.**

1. Brenda is **the** / - ideal for a / the job. She has **a** / - wealth of **the** / - experience.
2. **The** / - safety at **the** / - work is **a** / - major concern for us.
3. **The** / - poorest people in **the** / - country live in this city.
4. Have you seen **a** / **the** new Hamlet at **the** / - National Theatre?
5. There is **a** / - beautiful countryside within **an** / - easy reach of **a** / **the** hotel.
6. I have **a** / - terrible cold and am staying in **the** / - bed today.
7. I earn £6 **an** / **the** hour as **a** / - supermarket cashier on **the** / - Saturdays.
8. **The** / - charge for **an** / - excess luggage is £10 **a** / **the** kilo.

9. **The** / - most of **the** / - life is **a** / - matter of getting on with **the** / - others.
10. Britain is officially called **The** / - United Kingdom of **The** / - Great Britain and **The** / - Northern Ireland.

**ANSWER KEY**

- I  
1. the 2 a 3 the 4 - 5 the 6 the / - 7 the / - 8 - 9 a 10 the  
11 - 12 the 13 the 14 - 15 - 16 the 17 - 18 - 19 the 20 the  
21 - 22 the 23 - 24 a / - 25 the 26 a 27 the 28 the 29 a 30 -  
II I there the 2 - 3 the - 4 a 5 a - 6 the, an 7 The, - 8 The, the 9 the, the 10. the, -  
III 1. It's not first-class accommodation unless it has a private bathroom.  
2. On this record the twins play a piano duet.  
3. Halfway through the meal we realized what the waiter had said.  
4. If a / - Mrs Hitler phones, say I'm away on a trip.  
5. There is wonderful scenery in the eastern part of Turkey.  
6. The cocker spaniel is one of the most popular pet dogs.  
7. There is going to be fog and cold weather all next week.  
8. I spent a very interesting holiday at Lake Comiston in England.  
9. We are against war in general, so of course we are against a war like this between a superpower and a developing country.  
10. Burglars are definitely on the increase.  
IV 1. the 2 the, a / the, a 3 a, - 4 The, - 5 the, the / -, the  
6. the, The 7. the / - / 8 a, the 9 The, the 10. The, the  
V 1. the, the, a 2. the, - 3. the, the 4. - 5. the, a, - the  
6. The, a, - 7. a, the 8. the, a 9. the, a 10. a, the  
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VII 1. the, the, the 2. - 3. a 4. a 5. - 6. a, The 7. the, the 8. - 9. an, the 10. - the, the  
VIII 1. - 2. - 3. The, the 4. the, the 5. - 6. a, - 7. an, a - 8. The, - 9. - 10. The, -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzaCsQ0fZOC>