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BSc Degree

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English – I (Basic English)
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Articles – Part 2

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Uses of The:



1. Before a class noun which is already known to the listener or the reader.
 - I saw a snake. The snake was a cobra.
 - The book you gave me is missing.
(You gave me a book. The book is missing).
2. Before a class noun to refer to the whole class. Note: the articles a/an can also be used.
 - The crow is black. (A crow is black.)
 - The elephant has a trunk.
3. Before a proper noun in figurative sense.
 - Kalidas is the Shakespeare of India.
4. Before surnames when more than one person is referred to.
 - The Chettiaris live next my house.
 - The Smiths are coming.



Welcome to the class. Today, we are going to be talking about articles, we are going to tell you a little bit about the uses of the definite article. And that will also enhance the capacity of accuracy for the uses of articles. And as you know, these kinds of awareness, help us build our confidence in the uses. So, look at it, what we say the first broad class, broad example is,

we use a definite article before a class now, which is already known to the listener or the reader.

What is that supposed to mean? Look at the context. ‘I saw a snake’, look at this example here, in this slide, I saw a snake. So, until now, there is nothing known about the snake. So, we see I saw a snake, so I am using an indefinite article in front of this. But when it becomes known to the, to the next person in the conversation, my hearer next time I can say, or in the next sentence, I can say the snake was a cobra. Look at it, I am using ‘the’ in front of the snake now. Here, in this sentence, you have the here in this sentence you have ‘a’. So, we do not need to be confused about it, we can say we are using a in one case and the in the other case, so what is going on.

The important way to understand this thing is, we are using ‘a’ because the context is not known to the hearer in the second sentence, which is part of this course. Now when I already informed you about the snake, ‘I saw a snake’. Now, the next time I am talking referring to that snake, I can use the definite article that the meaning now I am talking when I say the snake was a cobra, now I am talking about which snake, the snake that I saw. So, we can use the similar thing in a different context, we can say, ‘the book you gave me is missing’. So, we can say in this context, a book that you gave me is missing, we can say you gave me a book.

The book that you gave me is missing means I am talking about the book that you gave to me, then it becomes a definite entity and hence the definite article here. We use a definite article before a class of now to refer to the whole class. So, the articles a and an can also be used, but I will tell you the context about it. So, look at this, the crow is black. So, we are saying the crow is black. Because we are referring we are using it before the whole class, the elephant has a trunk whole class, but you have just now seen we also said we can use an indefinite article in front of a noun, if that context refers to the whole class.

So, here the important part is whole class. So, we can also say a crow is black, an elephant has a Trunk. We can also say these things, the important thing is referring to the whole class when it refers to the whole class or not. We can also use definite article before a pronoun in a figurative sense, in a metaphorical sense, we can use definite article in front of a proper noun in a metaphorical context, that is in a figure of speech, when we use proper names as figure of speech, look at this. We can say ‘Kalidas is the same Shakespeare of India’. We are talking are talking about Kalidas and in the second example, we are not really talking about

Shakespeare, we are saying the Shakespeare of India, which means Kalidas is what Shakespeare is for some other place Kalidas is that for India or that of India.

So, in this context, we can say Kalidas is the Shakespeare of India. And we can have multiple examples of these things. We can say ‘Chennai is the Washington of India’. So, we would not use the Washington otherwise, but we are using in this context, because it is a figurative sense, it is a metaphor, we can use a definite article in front of last name that is surname.

So, we can say things like the Chettiar. In the context as the Chettiar live in the next house, we can say the Chettiar live next to my house, meaning we are not referring to one person we are talking about all of them, that is all people living in the house who have the name Chettiar. The Smiths are coming. So, we are not talking about one particular Smith, we are talking about a group of people who all are known as Smith. We can have such things in a context, as well we can say that the Guptas, the Swamis, and so on.

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5. Before the nouns that are only one (unique reference) – the sun, the moon, the earth, the prime minister, the president, the milky way etc.

- The sun rises in the east.
- The prime minister is arriving today.



6. Before material noun in specific sense. That is the material noun is specified and excluded from the rest.

- The water of the Ganga
- The rice of Dehradun.

7. Before the names of rivers, lakes, seas, oceans, group of islands, mountain ranges, newspapers, ships and some classical books

- The Nile/ The Ganga/ The Chilka lake/ The Arabian sea/The Andaman and Nicobar islands/ The Himalayas/The Times of India/ The Hindu/ The Bible/The Mahabharat.



Another context that we can see, we use a definite article in the context that are only one or unique in the difference. Like The Sun, The Moon, The Earth, The Prime Minister, The President, The Times of India, The Hindu, The Washington Post, The New York Times, because these have definite references, unique reference. Hence, definite article is called for. So, we say the sun rises in the east.

Look at this sentence, we are using definite article twice, the sun rises in the east, both have unique reference the sun and east, ‘the Prime Minister is arriving today’. So, when we are

referring to the Prime Minister, it is a unique position, it does not happen that there is another person, it never happens that there are multiple people as prime minister. So, he said ‘the Prime Minister is arriving today’. And if wherever you have a unique reference, you can use definite articles.

We also use definite articles before material nouns, before material noun in a specific sense that is the material noun is specified and excluded from the rest like the water of the Ganga. The rise of the Dehradun, meaning this is this has exclusive reference, we are not talking about general water we are talking about the water of the Ganga you see another example of the biggest Ganga has unique reference.

The rise of Dehradun not ordinary rise, but the rise of the Dehradun. And it is also before the names of rivers, lakes seas, oceans group of islands, mountain ranges newspaper, ship, and some classical books that I have just refer to The Nile, The Ganga, The Chilka lake, The Arabian Sea, The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, The Himalayas, just mentioned to you earlier the Times of India, The Hindu, The Bible, The Mahabharata, these are not just classical names, but all of them can be put in one category as unique reference.

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7. Before a noun which is followed by the preposition “of”.

- The front of my house
- The pages of my diary

Exception: Not in the case of noun in apposition

- Arundhati Roy, author of “The God of Small Things”, has become a political activist.
- Mr. Arjun, owner of this house, is my friend.



8. Before an adjective in superlative degree

- She is the brightest girl in the class.
- This is one of the most interesting books I have ever read.

9. With comparative degree when there is an increase or decrease in activity.

- The more he received, the more he wanted.
- The sooner you start, the better for you.



We have it before a noun which is followed by a preposition of as well, that is, we can use definite article in this then we can say the front of my house, the back of my house, the pages of my diary, in such context, we can use the definite article. We have given you two sentences here as an exception, but if you go into the details, they are not really exception.

We are saying not in the case of noun in but apposition. But if you see a noun in the apposition that say that is a name of something.

So, this rule does not apply here. But nonetheless, when you look at number 7 in the total context, you will understand that these are not counter examples to anything. Number 8, we use before an adjective in the superlative degree. So, we can say ‘she is the brightest girl’. So, ‘the’ the definite article is not used before an adjective. But keep in mind here it is not just an objective the moment we say use this in the superlative context it is also in front of a noun. So, we are not talking about just a girl we are talking about the brightest among all.

Therefore, it receives unique identity, hence the definite article. Same thing, this is one of the most interesting books, not an ordinary kind of book, of course, interesting books. But the most interesting, hence definiteness. A comparative degree when there is an increase or decrease in activity, the more he received, the more he wanted. So, it is a marker of comparison. But, you see the context. And in such cases, we do use definite article. The sooner you start, the better it is for you.

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Fill in the blanks with a/an / the in the given sentences:



- a) ----- seeds you sowed last week have sprung up.
- b) ----- bird was flying leisurely in the sky.
- c) It is such ----- difficult task that only ----- few are capable of doing it.
- d) Look at ----- sky; there are ----- sun and ----- moon shining together.
- e) He had ----- lot of money.
- f) You can't deny ----- fact that this revolver is yours.
- g) Are you going to see ----- world cup match in West Indies?
- h) Will you send ----- mechanic to repair my car?
- i) They have left me in ----- unsettling phase.
- j) ----- prime minister asked his ministers to arrive at ----- unanimous decision.



These are some of the examples. So, that is a quick discussion on definite and indefinite articles, and its uses. We are giving you some exercises and this is how we have designed some context for you based on the discussion so far. So, you can you spend some time on this and see which article can be used in these cases.

And when you read, things that you spend an hour reading with, please pay attention to the nouns that get articles in front of them and see, what is it making? Why is it the case that you have a specific article in front of that noun? a close attention to such things will familiarize you with the context and appropriateness in your users. So, please look at some of them.

We can say, ‘seeds you sowed last week have sprung up’, you need to decide what Article is the context in for definite or indefinite article, if indefinite which one of them. So, I leave it for you to work on this exercise, at least for yourself, and you can do is you can pay attention to more of them.

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Zero Articles

1. No article is used before the following class nouns when they are part of daily routine. (Home, church, temple, hospital, masjid/prison/work/sea/town/market/ railway station/ bus/ train/bed/court/college/university/office/father and mother.

- He is going home.
- I go to church every Sunday.
- She was admitted to hospital yesterday.
- Father is out of station.
- Mother is in the kitchen.
- He was confined to bed for three days.

2. No article is used before material and abstract nouns unless they are specified.

- He bought five bars of gold.
- The small child needs care.



In this context, I also need to tell you one small point is footnote that it is also possible that we do not use articles in certain contexts. And I am only giving you two of them. There could be more possible contexts where we do not use an article. In other words, we can call it zero article. That way, it becomes the fourth one.

So, it is not necessary that if there is a noun, we must have one of the three articles. It is possible that certain contexts do not meet any article such as such a situation such a context is called Zero article. So, look at this, we do not use articles before the following class noun, when they are part of a daily routine.

So, like home, church, temple, hospital, prison, work, sea, town market, railway station, we have listed a lot of them bus, train, bed, college, university, office, father or mother. These are part of our regular things. So, we do not use articles in front of them. We do not say ‘he is

going a home', we do not say 'he is going to the home', we simply say 'he is going home'. I go to church every Sunday; it is part of my daily routine. Hence, I do not want to say I go to the church every Sunday or I go to a church every Sunday. Get it? you have a whole list of things, some examples from the above listed materials for you to refer.

We also do not use articles before materials and abstract nouns unless they are specified. So, we can say he bought five bars of gold, the small child needs care. So, look at this. So, no article is used in a bars here bars of gold, as you can see. So, there are contexts in which we do not use articles. So, you can work on the context.

Most important concluding points that I want to tell you. I am repeating it again. When you read something, please pay attention to the uses of article and see if they fall in the categories that we have described here, or there is another category that will help you be updated with the information that we are putting in here and watchful for more context and information, which in turn will develop your confidence. And always remember, use of appropriate articles in spoken and written language improves and makes your language impressive. Thank you so much for your attention. Wait until next time, we bring something new for you. Thank you.