**Using the definite article with common and abstract nouns**

**Articles Definite vs Indefinite**

**The vs A/an**

**The man vs a man**

**Articles video- a must watch!**

**https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/articles**

**Discussing a general concept vs discussing a specific context**

**No Definite article Vs Using the definite article**

**What are Abstract nouns and Common Nouns??**

An **abstract noun** names a quality or an idea. Abstract nouns are nouns that name abstract concepts, or concepts that cannot be experienced with the senses. In contrast, **concrete nouns** name things that we can know by our senses (mosquito, grass, bacon, etc.)

We can think of an abstract noun as being similar to an abstract painting. Both abstract nouns and abstract art represent ideas instead of concrete objects.

**Examples of Abstract Nouns**

Examples of abstract nouns include *liberty, anger, freedom, love, generosity, charity,* and *democracy.* Notice that these nouns express ideas, concepts, or qualities that *cannot* be seen or experienced. We cannot see, hear, touch, taste, or smell these concepts.

If we return to the comparison of abstract nouns to abstract art, you can see that it would be difficult to paint an abstract concept like *liberty.* We might be able to paint something that *represents* liberty, though.

**Usage**

Like other nouns, abstract nouns can be used as the subject or object in a sentence. For example, the word *anger* is an abstract noun used as the subject of the following sentence:

*Anger* is a not a productive response to criticism.

(blackness, freshness, smoothness, **weight**, height, length, depth, strength, health, honesty, beauty, liberty, eternity, satisfaction, precision, splendor, terror, disappointment, elegance, existence, grace, peace.)

**When do you use or omit the article in the following instances?**

**~~The~~ life is beautiful or Life is beautiful?**

**Life is beautiful – in general**

**The life of Mahathma Ghandi was one that was of non-violence – specific concept**

**Happiness is important in life (General Concept) for all**

**The Happiness of my family matters to me (Specific)**

**Health is wealth (General concept)**

**The health of a nation determines the resistance of its citizens to withstand any challenges. (Specific)**

**My sister wants to lose weight (general)**

**My sister wants to lose the excess weight that she gained during the quarantine months!**

**Love is a psychological need for every child- universal**

**The love of a mother is invaluable to any child and it plays a key role in emotional well-being.**

**Governments (all over the world) should invest in education and healthcare for promoting a stable work force for a country**

**The government of Japan has decided to fund more for research in all disciplines of study.**

**Research - noun - stress on the 1st part**

**/research -verb - stress on the 2nd part**

**Increase - noun**

**/increase –verb**

**Refuse n refuse v**

**Society will always be the most realistic and pragmatic way of learning life**

**The society in modern times/ The modern society has succumbed to a vicious cycle of technological obsession!**

**In the past at present In the future**

**Koalas *love eating* fresh foliage on trees.**

**The koalas in Australian forests were critically affected during bush fires of recent times.**

**Koalas love to eat – Incorrect**

**I love cooking**

**I like listening to music**

**She prefers eating chocolate**

**Stative verbs – love like prefer know believe understand hope**

**I have ~~a/~~an MA - em**

**I have a/~~an~~ Masters in English - m**

**I have ~~a/~~an ~~h~~onours degree –aw**

**~~a/~~an sms es**

**Point 2**

**Roman Alphabet = consonants vs vowels a e I o u but there are 44 vowel sounds in English based on these 5 vowel sounds . You can find them all in the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)**

**Vowel sound - an**

**Consonant sound – a**

**A university vs An umbrella**

**Why A university an honest person an umbrella a union**

**y y**

**Yuniversity o**

**A unicorn but**

**A union**

**Yunion (Sound of y)**

**But**

**An honest person/ A unique attempt / An umbrella?**

**Activity**

**Can you insert articles where necessary?**

1. **Where there is life there is hope**
2. **Sun rises in East**
3. **Brave soldier lost arm in battle**
4. **The doctor says it is hopeless case**
5. **Have you told him about accident?**
6. **I met him year ago**
7. **Umbrella is of no avail against thunderstorm**
8. **There is nothing like staying at home for comfort**
9. **Man cannot live by bread alone**
10. **People are too often led by prejudice**

**Answers**

1. **Where there is life there is hope**
2. **The Sun rises in the East**
3. **The/a brave soldier lost an arm in the/a battle**
4. **The doctor says it is a hopeless case**
5. **Have you told him about the accident?**
6. **I met him a year – ye ago ear iya**
7. **An (any)Umbrella is of no avail against a (any) thunderstorm**
8. **There is nothing like staying at home for comfort**
9. **Man cannot live by bread alone**
10. **People (in general) are too often led by prejudice/greed/avarice**
11. **Virtues- vices**

**You can stay at my home/place**

**~~You can stay in my home~~**

**Distinguish**

**I have a black and white dog – 1**

**Vs**

**I have a black and a white dog - 2**

**The secretary and treasurer is absent -**

**vs**

**The secretary and treasurer are absent -**

**a**

**He is a better mechanic than clerk**

**vs**

**He is a better mechanic than a clerk**

**Answers**

**I have a black and white dog = 1 animal partly black and partly white**

**Vs**

**I have a black and a white dog = 2 dogs , one is white and the other black**

**The secretary and treasurer is absent = 2 nouns refer to the same person (this person holds both positions)**

**vs**

**The secretary and treasurer are absent = they represent 2 people**

**He is a better mechanic than clerk =(He is a mechanic as well as a clerk but he’s a better mechanic)- 1 person**

**vs**

**He is a better mechanic than a clerk = Compare two people**

**2**

**Extra info!**

**Other contexts**

**Singular nouns**

Singular, countable nouns always have an article – *a*/*an* or *the* (or another determiner – *my*, *your*, *this*, *that*, etc.).

We use *a*/*an* – the indefinite article – when we talk about something for the first time, or something that is part of a group or type.

*I saw* ***a*** *good film yesterday.  
Do you want* ***a*** *drink?*

We use *a* when the word that follows it begins with a consonant sound. We use *an* when it's followed by a vowel sound. This makes pronunciation easier.

*She has* ***a*** *university degree.  
It took me* ***an*** *hour to get home.*

We use *the* – the definite article – when the listener already knows which thing we are talking about because it was mentioned before or because there's only one of them.

*I'm going to take* ***the*** *dog for a walk.  
Have you seen* ***the*** *car key?  
They go to* ***the*** *school next to* ***the*** *bridge.*

**Common phrases**

We don't usually use an article in expressions with *bed*, *work* and *home*. I came to my home/came home

*go to bed / be in bed I’m in bed  
go to work / be at work / start work / finish work  
go home / be at home / get home / stay at home*

We also don't normally use an article in expressions with ***school*, *university*, *prison* and *hospital*.**

I WENT TO THE HOME - I WENT HOME

I went to the bank – I WENT TO THE HNB/ TO HNB

I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL- I went to Asiri

I WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET- I WENT TO KEELLS/ TO THE KEELLS

I WENT TO THE TEMPLE

**I went to the airport – I went to Katunayke airport**

**I went to the kandy/ kandy**

**SOV – SVO**

**I VISITED A FRIND OF MINE**

**I paid a visit to a friend of mine**

**I went to my friend’s home/house**

*start school / go to school / be at school  
go to university / be at university  
be sent to prison / go to prison / be in prison  
go to hospital / be in hospital*

But we usually use *the* if someone is just visiting the place, and not there as a student/prisoner/patient, etc.

*My son has started* ***school*** *now. I went to* ***the school*** *to meet his teacher.  
I went to* ***the prison*** *a lot when I was a social worker.  
I'm at* ***the hospital****. My sister has just had a baby.*

**When to Omit Articles**

As the first sentence in the previous example shows, you can sometimes omit the article particularly when the number or quantity is not known. Sometimes you would use the article in American English but not British English. For example:

* "I have to go to the hospital." (American English)
* "I have to go to hospital." (British English)

Conversely, sometimes you omit the article in American English but not in British English, as in:

* "I played rugby." (American English)
* "I play the rugby. (British English)

In these cases, the use, or omission, of the definite article depends on the type of English being spoken.

**Place names**

We don't normally use an article for continents, most countries, cities, towns, lakes, mountains or universities. So, we say:

*Africa, Asia, Europe  
India, Ghana, Peru, Denmark  
Addis Ababa, Hanoi, New York, Moscow  
Lake Victoria, Lake Superior, Lake Tanganyika  
Mount Everest, Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus  
Cardiff University, Harvard University, Manchester University*

**Universities with of in the title also have the:**

the University of Cape Town, the University of Delhi, the University of Tokyo

**Activity**

**Insert articles if and when necessary**

1. I'm still at work but I'll leave soon.
2. I'm going to prison to see my uncle.

3. University of Nottingham is in United Kingdom.

4. Every Friday my grandad goes to prison to teach a maths class.

5. She was born in Japan, but she went to university in Bahamas.

6. My daughter does piano classes after  School

7. I'm going to  school for a parents' meeting.

8. The Danube flows from Germany, through  Central Europe to

Black Sea.

**Answers**

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**"The"**

**When to Use "The"**

"The" is used with both singular and plural nouns and with both countable and uncountable nouns when the noun is specific.

* ***The*** *book* that I read last night was great.
  + In this sentence, "book" is a singular, countable noun. It is also specific because of the phrase “that I read last night.” The writer and reader (or speaker and listener) know which book is being referred to.
* ***The*** *books* assigned for this class are very useful.
  + In this sentence, "books" is a plural, countable noun. It is also specific because of the phrase “for this class.” The writer and reader (or speaker and listener) know which books are being referred to.
* ***The*** *advice* you gave me was very helpful.
  + In this sentence, "advice" is an uncountable noun. However, it is specific because of the phrase “you gave me.” It is clear which piece of advice was helpful.

Here are some more specific rules:

"The" is used in the following categories of proper nouns:

* **Museums and art galleries**: ***the*** Walker Art Center, ***the*** Minneapolis Institute of Art
* **Buildings**: ***the*** Empire State Building, ***the*** Willis Tower
* **Seas and oceans**: ***the*** Mediterranean Sea, ***the*** Atlantic Ocean
* **Rivers**: ***the*** Mississippi, ***the*** Nile
* **Deserts**: ***the*** Sahara Desert, ***the*** Sonora Desert
* **Periods and events in history: *the*** Dark Ages, ***the*** Civil War
* **Bridges:** ***the*** London Bridge, ***the*** Mackinac Bridge
* **Parts of a country**: ***the*** South, ***the*** Upper Midwest

In general, use "the" with plural proper nouns.

* ***the*** Great Lakes
* ***the*** French
* ***the*** Rockies (as in the Rocky Mountains)

"The" is often used with proper nouns that include an “of” phrase.

* ***the*** United States of America
* ***the*** University of Minnesota
* ***the*** International Swimming Hall of Fame

Use "the" when the noun being referred to is unique because of our understanding of the world.

* ***The*** Earth moves around ***the*** sun.
* Wolves howl at ***the*** moon.

Use "the" when a noun can be made specific from a previous mention in the text. This is also known as second or subsequent mention.

* My son bought a cat. I am looking after ***the*** cat while he is on vacation.
* I read a good book. ***The*** book was about how to use articles correctly in English.

"The" is used with superlative adjectives, which are necessarily unique (the first, the second, the biggest, the smallest, the next, the only, etc.).

* It was***the*** **first** study to address the issue.
* She was ***the*** **weakest** participant.
* He was ***the* only** person to drop out of the study.

Biber et al. (1999) found that "the"is about twice as common as "a" or "an" in academic writing. This may be because writers at this level often focus on overall ideas and categories ([generic reference](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/articles#s-lg-box-9389365), usually no article) and on specific references (definite reference, the article "the").

* Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of written and spoken English*. Pearson.

**No Article (Generic Reference)**

Writers sometimes struggle with the choice to include an article or to leave it out altogether. Keep in mind that if the noun is singular, countable, and nonspecific or generic (e.g., book, author), the articles "a" and "an" may be used. However, if the noun is countable and plural (e.g.., "research studies") or uncountable (e.g., "information") and it is being used in a nonspecific or generic way, no article is used.

Here are some more specifics:

* No article is used when a plural countable noun is generic or nonspecific.
  + I bought new ***pens*** and ***pencils*** at the store. (general, not specific ones)
  + ***Cats*** have big eyes that can see in the dark. (cats in general, all of them)
  + ***Babies*** cry a lot. (babies in general, all of them)
* No article is used when a noncount noun is generic or nonspecific.
  + I bought ***milk*** and ***rice*** at the store. (generic reference)
  + We were assigned ***homework*** in this class. (generic reference)
  + There has been previous ***research*** on the topic. (generic reference)

**Articles in Phrases and Idiomatic Expressions**

Sometimes article usage in English does not follow a specific rule. These expressions must be memorized instead.

Here are some examples of phrases where article usage is not predictable:

* Destinations: *go to* ***the*** *store, go to* ***the*** *bank*, **but** *go to school, go to church, go to bed, go home*
* Locations: *in school, at home, in bed,* **but** *in* ***the*** *hospital* (in American English)
* Parts of the day: *in* ***the*** *morning, in* ***the*** *evening,* **but** *at night*
* Chores: *mow* ***the*** *lawn, do* ***the*** *dishes, do* ***the*** *cleaning*

There are also numerous idiomatic expressions in English that contain nouns. Some of these also contain articles while others do not.

Here are just a few examples:

* To give someone ***a*** hand
* In ***the*** end
* To be on time

https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/articles