

Your name:

# The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2018



## Problem 1. (In)definitely Romanian (5 marks)

Romanian is spoken by about 26 million people in Romania and Moldova, and (as its name suggests) it is descended from Latin (the language of Rome). How does Romanian say 'a' and 'the'? Use these examples to find out, and fill in the blanks (marked with '?') in the table. Note that a and ă are pronounced differently and that the difference matters.



biletul	the ticket
un bilet	a ticket
băiatul	the boy
un băiat	?
fata	the girl
o fată	a girl
franzela	the bread roll
o franzelă	?
leguma	the vegetable
?	a vegetable
?	the pencil
un creion	a pencil
cartea	the book
o carte	?
?	the love
o dragoste	a love
casă	house
?	a house
?	the house
prieten	friend
?	the friend
?	a friend

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## Solution and marking.

Scoring (max 20)

- 2 points for each correct cell
- 1 point with one wrong letter – but not if this is word-final a or ă

biletul	the ticket
un bilet	a ticket
băiatul	the boy
un băiat	a boy
fata	the girl
o fată	a girl
franzela	the bread roll
o franzelă	a bread roll
leguma	the vegetable
o legumă	a vegetable
creionul	the pencil
un creion	a pencil
cartea	the book
o carte	a book
dragostea	the love
o dragoste	a love
casă	house
o casă	a house
casa	the house
prieten	friend
prietenul	the friend
un prieten	a friend

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## Commentary

The point of this problem is to analyse the area of Romanian grammar that deals with definite and indefinite articles. As in other Romance (descended from Latin) languages, the form of the article depends on the noun to which it is attached, but unlike other such languages, the definite article appears as a suffix on the noun (a feature that it shares with neighbouring Balkan languages such as Bulgarian).

The nouns in this exercise fall into two groups:

1. masculine nouns, which all end in a consonant.
2. feminine nouns, which end in e or ă.

(There is actually a third gender, 'neuter', but this isn't represented here.) Since the genders can also be identified by their last letter, competitors don't need to recognise genders; indeed, the last two words require them to classify a word solely on the basis of its form.

	class 1	class 2
indefinite	un	o
definite	-ul	-a

The only complication is that when –a is added after ă the latter disappears, leaving just –a.