

## II. Articles

| The (definite article)   | A/ An (indefinite articles)   |
|--|---|
| Developed from a word meaning <b>this</b> .<br>Signals a <b>particular</b> person or thing.<br><i>The students sitting next to you is my cousin.</i><br>Used with singular or plural nouns , countable and uncountable | Developed from a word meaning <b>one</b> .<br>Signals an <b>unspecified</b> one of others.<br><i>A student is sitting in front of the row.</i><br>Used only with singular countable nouns |

### • The indefinite article

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The form <b>a</b> is used before a word beginning with a consonant, or a vowel sounded like consonant.<br><i>A man – a table – a book – a house</i><br><i>A university – a useful thing – a year – a European</i> | The form <b>an</b> is used before words beginning with a vowel ( <b>a, e, i, o, u</b> ) or a mute <b>h</b><br><i>An egg – an actor – an email – an orange</i><br><i>An hour – an honourable man</i> |
|---|---|

► They are the **same** for **all genders** : **a** man – **a** woman      **an** actor – **an** actress

### How do we use **indefinite** articles?

- Before a singular countable noun when it is mentioned for the first time and represents no particular person or thing : **A** dog is **an** animal      I see **a** man coming      I need **a** holiday  
**A** cat can catch **a** mouse      **A** house has **a** roof      We have **a** class in a room in the top floor
- Before a singular countable noun which is used as an example of a class of things :  
**A** cow has horns (i.e. all cows have horns)      **An** elephant never forgets  
**A** car must be insured (i.e. all cars must be insured)      **A** bird is an animal that has wings and flies.
- With a noun complement (predicate nominative) . This includes names of professions.  
He is **a** doctor      She is **a** teacher      He became **a** great man
- In certain numerical expressions : **a** couple, **a** dozen, half **a** dozen, **a** score, **a** hundred, **a** thousand, **a** million, **a** great deal of, **a** lot of, **a** good amount of, **a** little of...
- In expressions of price, speed, ratio, etc : six pence **a** pound      £5 **a** kilo      \$1 **a** metre  
four times **a** day      6 miles **an** hour
- With **few** and **little** ( used with a plural or uncountable nouns):  
**A few** = a small number, or what the speaker considers a small number.  
*A few people came.    A few students study at the library.*  
**A little** = a small amount, or what the speaker considers a small amount.

*It rained **a little** during the night.      We had time to relax **a little** bit.*

- So that '**a little time**' can mean days or years depending on the speaker; and '**a few friends**' can mean two or three, or twenty or thirty.

- **Few** and **little** can also be used without article, but then have an almost negative meaning, and can usually be replaced by **hardly, any** :

*We had **little** time for amusement* implies that we were always busy.

***Few** people know this* = it is almost unknown

7. In exclamations before singular countable nouns: What **a** hot day! Such **a** pity!
8. **A** can be placed before Mr. / Mrs. / Miss ( to mean a certain...):  
*A Mr. Smith called while you were out.* = means a man called Smith and implies he is a stranger to the speaker.  
*Mr. Smith* (without **a**) = implies that the speaker knows Mr. Smith or knows of his existence.
9. Before abbreviations : **an** MP   **an** FBI agent   **a** NATO general   **a** FIFA official

### Omission of indefinite articles

1. Before plural nouns : **a** dog → dogs   **an** egg → eggs
2. Before uncountable nouns: information, news, furniture, ... They are often preceded by **some, any, a little, a lot of, a piece of, ...**  
*I'll give you **a piece of** information*      **Not** → an information
- **Knowledge** is also considered uncountable, but when used in a particular sense it takes the article : ***A** knowledge of languages is always useful.*
- Materials (glass, iron, paper, cloth, tea, ...) are uncountable. But many of these nouns can also denote one particular thing, and then take an article :  
*Windows are made of glass*      but      *Have **a** glass of milk*  
*Iron is a metal*      but      *I use **an** electric iron*
3. Before abstract nouns (**beauty, happiness, fear, death, ...**) except when they are used in a particular sense : *He was pale with fear*      *Some children suffer from **a** fear of the dark.*
4. Before names of meals, except when preceded by an adjective :

*We have breakfast at eight.      Grandma gave us **a** good breakfast.*

→ The article is used when it is a special meal given to celebrate something or in someone's honour:      *I was invited to dinner (at their house, in the ordinary way)*

**BUT**      *I was invited to **a** dinner given to welcome the new ambassador.*

**Let's Practise:** Correct the following sentences by adding **a/an** where necessary.

1. Jim goes everywhere by bike. He hasn't got car. A car
2. Ann was listening to music when I arrived. \_\_\_\_\_
3. We went to very nice restaurant last weekend. \_\_\_\_\_ a very \_\_\_\_\_
4. I clean my teeth with toothpaste. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I had delicious lunch with my friend yesterday. \_\_\_\_\_ a deliious \_\_\_\_\_

6. This ornament is made of paper. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Jane married Mr. Williams. \_\_\_\_\_
8. What pretty girls they are ! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Would you like apple ? \_\_\_\_\_ an apple \_\_\_\_\_
10. Amine has good knowledge of computing. \_\_\_\_\_ a good \_\_\_\_\_
11. I have problem . Can you help me ? \_\_\_\_\_ a problem \_\_\_\_\_

### • The definite article (**the**)

The definite article **the** is the same for singular and plural and all genders:

**The** boy      **the** boys                      **the** girl      **the** girls

### How do we use the definite article ?

1. Before nouns of which there is only one, or which are considered as one :  
**The** earth      **the** sky      **the** weather      **the** North Pole
2. Before a noun which has become definite as a result of being mentioned in the second time:  
*His car struck **a** tree; you can still see the mark in **the** tree.*
3. Before a noun made definite by the addition of a phrase or a clause :  
**The** boy that I met      **The** place where I met him  
**The** girl in blue      **The** man on the horse
4. Before a noun which, by reason of locality, can represent a particular thing :  
**Ann is in the garden** ( = the garden of the house)  
*He went to **the** doctor* (= his own doctor)  
*Please pass **the** milk* (= the milk on the table)
5. Before **superlatives** and **first/ second/ ...**, and **only**, used as adjectives or pronouns :  
*Mont Blanc is **the** highest mountain in Europe.*  
*It is **the** first time I meet her.                      He is **the** only friend I have.*
6. Before a singular noun used to represent a class of objects :  
**The** dolphin is intelligent (= all dolphins are intelligent)
7. Before an adjective used to represent a class of people :  
*There is no place for any but **the** dead.      **The** strong must not oppress **the** weak*  
***The** old and **the** young should live together.*
8. Before names of seas, rivers, chains of mountains, groups of islands, canals, oceans, and plural names of countries : The Mediteranean Sea, The Nile, **The** Atlantic Ocean, **The** Thames      **The** Alps      **The** U.S.A  
**The** U.S.S.R      **The** Netherlands      **The** Orkneys      The U.A.E
9. Before musical instruments : *She learned the play **the** flute/ **the** piano/ **the** guitar*

### **Omission** of the definite article

1. Before countries, towns, proper nouns (See: Proper Nouns in the previous lesson) :  
*Mr. Jones returned to **Wales** and bought a house in **Swansea**.*  
 ➤ **Exceptions** : The U.S.A    the Congo    The Sudan    The Netherlands    the Mall  
    The High Street  
    The Smiths (= Mr. and Mrs. Smith and the family)
2. Before abstract nouns except when they are used in a particular sense :  
*Death has no cure                      **The** death of the prime minister left his party without a*

leader.

*Everyone looks for happiness      **The** happiness of her children is her priority*

3. Before names of meals: *I have eggs for breakfast.*

**BUT** ***The** wedding breakfast was held in her father's house.*

4. Before names of games, sports, activities, feasts, diseases :

*He likes playing tennis.      She suffers from polio.      They are celebrating Christmas.*

5. Before uncountable nouns: *Honey/milk is good for one's health.*

6. Before parts of the body and articles of clothing, as these normally prefer possessive adjectives: *Raise **your** right hand.      He took off **his** coat.*

- **BUT** notice sentences of the type :

*She seized the child's collar → **could be expressed** → She seized the child by **the** collar.*

*The brick hit John's face      →      The brick hit John in **the** face*

- Similarly in the passive: *He was hit on **the** head.      He was cut in **the** hand.*

7. Before **home** when it is used alone: *He went home.*

**BUT** when followed by a descriptive word or phrase, the article is used and not omitted:

*For some years, this was **the** home of the queen.*

- **Mosque, chapel, church, market, college, school, hospital, court, prison, work, sea,** bed these nouns are used without « **the** » when they are visited or used for their primary purpose :

*We go to **mosque** to pray      **BUT**      I went to **the** mosque to clean it.*

*Sailors go to **sea** every day.      **BUT**      They are at **the** sea. (= at the seaside)*

- In contrast to the above list, the following very common nouns always take « **the** » :

**Cathedral, office, cinema, theatre:** *He is at **the** office.      She is going to **the** cinema.*

8. Before names of lakes, mountains, countries, cities, airports, lakes, parks, :

Mount Everest      Scotland      London      Kennedy Airport      Hyde Park

**Let's practise:** Put 'the' where necessary or leave the space blank if it is not needed.

1. I haven't been to .....The.....theatre for ages.
2. I lay down on .....The... ground and looked up at ....The.....sky.
3. Sheila spends most of her free time watching .....The.....television.
4. ....The.....television was on but nobody was watching it.
5. Have you had ..... dinner yet ?
6. Mary and I arrived at .....The.. same time.
7. Who is .....The... oldest of your brothers ?
8. I don't usually have .....lunch but I always eat .....A...good breakfast.
9. We missed our train because we were waiting on .....The....wrong platform. We were on .....Platform 3 instead of ..... Platform 8.

10. ....The....film "Brave Heart" recounts ....The....fight for .....independence in  
.....Scotland.

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