

When to use *a*, when to use *the*, and when to use neither of them

“a” □ one out of many

e.g. “a girl in class five” □ there is more than one girl in class five, and she is one of them.

e.g. “I lent Isaac a red pen” □ I have more than one red pen, and I gave him one.

I don't need to give extra information about the object, because **any one of that object is OK.*

“the” □ a *specific* one, (～その)

e.g. “the girl in class five” □ there is only one girl in class five. I'm talking about her.

e.g. “This is the year that I will win the strongman contest.” □ It is specifically this year that I will win; not last year, not next year, not in 2051. *This specific year.*

I need to give extra information about the object, so people know **which one I am talking about.*

Don't use “a” nor “the” if:

1. The object is a name

□ “I gave a pen to the Isaac.” ×

□ “She played soccer in a Fukiai high school.” ×

2. There is more than one object

□ “He went to the store to buy a five items.” ×

□ “He went to the store to buy the five items.” Δ

◇ If we have already mentioned five specific items (if the reader knows *which* five items we are talking about), then “the” is ○. If it's any five items, or we don't know *which* five items, then it's ×.

Summary:

	one of many (not specific)	specific one
1 object	a	the
2+ objects	—	the* / —

**only if we know which ones*

Let's try it!

In the sentences below, write “a” or “the” or leave it blank so the sentences are correct.

1. Last week, he climbed ____ mountain in the Himalayas.
2. Satoru gave me ____ small sculpture for White Day.
3. People use telescopes to see ____ constellations.
4. We will beat ____ baseball team from Kagikou.
5. I will not make ____ same mistake that I made on the last exam.
6. ____ Basia should have taught us this at ____ beginning of this year.
7. I studied harder than ever, so this is ____ test on which I will get a perfect score.
8. She works as ____ firefighter in Sapporo.