

# 20

## articles (1)

### article use depending on context

- When we refer to something we have already mentioned, we use the definite article.  
*First, I grate some cheese. Then I sprinkle **the cheese** into the sauce.*
- A noun can be made definite by the details which follow it. This is called post-modification.  
*There's a tower over there. Yes, it's **the Tower of London**.*
- Some things are definite because they are already known to the people talking about them.  
*Jim is at **the pub**. (= The one we all usually go to.)*  
*Pass **the vegetables**, please. (= These ones on the table.)*

### groups and classes

- An example of a thing, instrument etc uses *a / an*.  
*A **barometer** is used to measure air pressure.*
- We use *a / an* for one of a class of things or people.  
*Peter is a **German**. Maria is a **teacher**. This is an **electric shaver**.*
- We use *a / an* for one of a set of named things.  
*They've bought a **Picasso**. (= a work of art)*  
*This is a **Henry Moore sculpture**.*
- We use *zero article* with plurals and uncountables when they refer to a class of things or people in general.  
***Teachers** often work very long hours.*  
***Water** is becoming a scarce resource.*  
***Girls** are better at learning **foreign languages** than **boys**.*  
  
*These too can be made specific, eg by the details which follow.*  
***The water** tastes funny. (= the water from the tap)*  
***The girls in my class** learn fast. (= these particular girls)*
- A singular noun to describe a class of things uses *the*.  
***The bicycle** is becoming increasingly popular.*  
***The whale** is in danger of extinction.*

### ideas

- Abstract ideas use *zero article*.  
***Health** is one of the most important things in **life**.*  
  
*Note that an abstract noun can be made specific by what comes after it – then we use **the**.*  
***The health of** millions of people may be at risk.*

### numbers and measurement

- With rates and speeds use *a / an*.  
*The car was going at **50km an hour**. The rent is **£500 a month**.*
- Use *a / an* for large whole numbers, fractions with singular nouns, weights and distances.  
*a hundred a million a third a fifth*  
*two and a half a kilo a metre and a half*  
*But: two and seven eighths half-way*  
  
***Half** is usually used without an article.*  
*He has eaten **half** of the cake.*

## people

- We use zero article with names of people, unless we specify the person.  
*Tom lives in Bristol. Is he **the Tom Davis** you went to school with?*
- We can use *a / an* with names when we mean 'a person called ...'  
*Is there a **Tom Davis** staying here?*
- We can use *the* with the names of groups, when these are clearly plural.  
*the Democrats*  
However, if a proper name comes before the noun there will be zero article.  
*Euro MPs Manchester United supporters*
- Names of music groups vary a great deal, and may not fit general rules.  
*The Who Primal Scream*  
Many groups of people are described by *the* + singular adjective.  
*the unemployed the dead*

## cities, towns, streets, places

- Use zero article with proper names, though *the* is used when there is post modification with *of*.  
*I live in **Allan Road** in Bristol in an area called **Redland**.  
Oxford University **the University of** Oxford*
- Use *the* with the names of shops and places with a general reference.  
*at **the** cinema / **the** supermarket / in **the** garden / in **the** mountains / at **the** beach etc*
- Other places vary. If they begin with the name of a place or person, then they tend to use zero article.  
*London Bridge Waterloo Station Madame Tussaud's*  
But: *the London Eye*  
Otherwise they use *the*.  
*the Golden Gate Bridge the Hard Rock Café the Odeon Cinema*
- Note that a place name can also be used as an adjective, in which case we could use *the*.  
*The London rush hour can cause long delays.*  
Some other cities have adjective forms, eg *Paris / Parisian, Rome / Roman*.

## unique objects

- *The* is used with some familiar objects when we think of them as the only one.  
*The Sun was setting over **the** sea. The moon rose into **the** sky.*

## illness etc

- *A / an* is used with a headache, a cold etc.  
*Have you got a cold / a headache / a toothache / an earache?*  
Most illness words use zero article.  
*I've got flu. She's suffering from **appendicitis**.*

## exclamations

- Use *a / an* in the expressions *what a ...!*, *such a ...!*  
We use *what a ...* when we are surprised or impressed by something.  
*What a fantastic sight! What an awful room!*  
We use *such a / an ...* for emphasis with singular nouns.  
*This is **such a** great film! He is **such an** interesting person.*

(See also Unit 21.)

1 Complete the text with *the* or zero article.

- a *The* survival of ..... most large mammals is being put at risk by ..... global warming.
- b Is ..... person you are talking about ..... Jane Small you knew at ..... university?
- c ..... foreigners often have ..... trouble getting used to ..... Scottish climate.
- d ..... decoration in ..... small bedroom is really pleasing but I don't like ..... colour of curtains.
- e I missed ..... beginning of ..... film, so I didn't understand ..... plot until half-way through.
- f ..... experts disagree as to whether ..... men are ..... better drivers than ..... women.
- g ..... most of ..... people I know don't always get on with ..... other people ..... first time they meet them.
- h What exactly is ..... difference between ..... rhythm of a piece of ..... music and ..... tune?
- i Helen has gone to ..... library to get ..... information she needs for ..... project she's doing at ..... school.
- j I don't know why you always put ..... sugar in your coffee if you're trying to lose ..... weight.

2 Complete the text with *a / an* or *the*, or leave blank for zero article.

## George Orwell

a *The* author George Orwell (1903–1950: real name Eric Blair) was b ..... English novelist, critic and political and cultural commentator. He is best known for c ..... novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, d ..... both of which were written and published toward e ..... end of his life. He chose f ..... name George Orwell in g ..... early 1930s when his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, was published. This book describes what it was like to be h ..... poor and i ..... homeless in j ..... Britain, and also described k ..... time he spent in Paris working in l ..... kitchen of m ..... high-class hotel. n ..... Orwell's father was o ..... civil servant in India, and Orwell grew up in p ..... middle-class family. He was q ..... pupil at Eton, r ..... well-known English school, and as his family could not afford to send him to university, he joined s ..... Indian Imperial Police. He learnt t ..... lot about u ..... British Empire, but came to hate v ..... job, and in 1927 he resigned and decided to become w ..... writer. He worked as x ..... schoolteacher, and in y ..... bookshop, wrote z ..... book about 1 ..... poverty in 2 ..... northern England (*The Road to Wigan Pier*) and also fought for 3 ..... Republican side in 4 ..... Spanish civil war. He developed 5 ..... career as 6 ..... journalist and reviewer, and during 7 ..... Second World War he made 8 ..... regular broadcasts on 9 ..... BBC. He died of 10 ..... tuberculosis in 1950 at 11 ..... age of 46.



### 3 Complete the sentences with *a / an* or *the*.

- a The tiger is ..... animal which struggles to survive in ..... modern world.  
 b I need ..... kilo and ..... half of minced beef, but I want all ..... fat taken off please.  
 c ..... art gallery used to own ..... Picasso, but it was stolen in ..... daring daylight robbery.  
 d ..... first thing students need to appreciate is that ..... laboratory can be ..... dangerous place.  
 e We spent ..... week in Paris and had ..... great time going up ..... Eiffel Tower, and taking  
 ..... trip along ..... Seine in ..... small boat.  
 f Tom Gibson, ..... architect mainly responsible for ..... design of ..... new building, lives in  
 ..... farmhouse in ..... country.  
 g ..... rent is €1000 ..... month because ..... apartment is in ..... most expensive part  
 of ..... city.  
 h I can never understand ..... US elections, because I'm not sure I know ..... difference between  
 ..... Democrats and ..... Republicans.  
 i ..... worst thing about travelling on the motorway is that if there is ..... accident, there is usually  
 ..... huge traffic jam.  
 j My dad is down at ..... pub having ..... drink with ..... other members of ..... pub-quiz team.

### 4 Complete the text with *a / an* or *the*, or leave blank for zero article.

## Bird migration

Whether **a** ..... **a** ..... particular species of **b** ..... bird migrates depends on **c** ..... number of **d** ..... factors. **e** ..... most important influence on **f** ..... migration is **g** ..... climate of **h** ..... area where **i** ..... birds breed, and **j** ..... small number of birds remain in an area where there is **k** ..... harsh winter. So in **l** ..... Scandinavia **m** ..... blackbird is **n** ..... migratory bird, but it is not **o** ..... migratory in **p** ..... southern Europe where **q** ..... winters are milder. Another factor is **r** ..... type of **s** ..... food involved. Some birds eat mainly **t** ..... insects which are not available in winter, so these birds have to undertake **u** ..... migration in order to find food. However, lack of **v** ..... food is not **w** ..... trigger for migration, and birds need to be well fed before they start **x** ..... long-distance flight. The main reasons for **y** ..... migrating seem to be partly genetic and partly as **z** ..... result of **1** ..... small changes in **2** ..... weather or in **3** ..... length of **4** ..... day.



GLOSSARY

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Choose a paragraph from a book and make a practice passage like the ones in Exercises 2 and 4. Remove all articles and leave a space, add spaces for zero article, and add some trick spaces. Ask someone else in the class to complete your practice passage, and show them the original passage so they can check their answers.

Need more practice? Go to the **Review** on page 208.