

ARTICLES

Articles

- A **determiner**
- A word which is used with a noun, and which refers to something **definite** or **indefinite**
- How many articles?
 - Definite article (THE)
 - Indefinite article (A/AN, zero)

Indefinite Article – **A/ AN**

- Used with **singular countable nouns** only
- Used to talk about one of something which we assumed the listener/ reader **doesn't know which specific thing**

A *car* drove past.

Definite Article **THE**

- Used with
 - singular **countable** nouns
 - **plural countable** nouns
 - **uncountable** nouns

A man is coming to fix the television.

- Used to talk about a specific example of something which (we think) is known to both ourselves and the listener/ reader.

The cars were parked illegally in the city center.

Zero Article

- Used with
 - **uncountable** nouns
 - **plural countable** nouns
- Used to talk about things **generally**, not an individual item or example

Money doesn't necessarily bring happiness.

Students never like tests.

THE or Zero?

THE + nouns that are always singular

- Something which is considered there is only one in existence (unique)
 - ***the** sun*
 - ***the** moon*
 - ***the** seaside*
 - ***the** UN*
 - ***the** government*
- Superlatives
 - *He's **the best** accountant in town.*

THE or Zero

Nouns with ZERO

- Uncountable and plural countable nouns with a general sense (to refer to general ideas and categories)

***Cars** and **buses** are a major source of **pollution** in **cities**.*

- Abstract uncountable nouns

***Laughter** is good for you.*

*“**Intelligence** is something you are born with, not something you learn.”*

General or Specific – THE

| General | Specific |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>I like all kinds of music.</i> | <i>The music of Skalkottas is virtually unknown outside Greece.</i> |
| <i>Is there life after death?</i> | <i>It was a film about the life of a polar explorer.</i> |
| <i>Students don't like exams.</i> | <i>The students who once failed this test are very nervous.</i> |

Classifying – Referring to a group

1. Plural nouns with zero article

***Seagulls** are found close to the coast. (generally)*

2. Singular nouns with A/ AN

***A seagull** is a large white and grey bird. (all seagulls)*

*I've been studying **a seagull**. (one particular seagull)*

*I've been studying **seagulls**. (seagulls as a group)*

3. Singular nouns with THE

***The blackbird** has a lovely song.*

Classifying – Special Groups

1. Parts of the body

*I looked at him straight **in the eye**.*

*He's a pain **in the neck**.*

- When the noun is related to the **OBJECT** of the sentence (or **SUBJECT** in passive) → **THE**

*The bird was shot **in the wing**.*

*He gave the child a pat **on the back**.*

- When the noun is related to the **SUBJECT** of the sentence → **POSSESSIVES**

*That seagull had hurt **its** wing.*

*He's had a lot of trouble with **his** heart.*

Classifying – Special Groups

2. Musical instruments

- About instruments generically

***The horn** is one of the most difficult orchestral instruments to play.*

- About bands, orchestras, recordings, etc.

*I used to play **trumpet** in my school orchestra.*

*Does that recording have Clapton on **guitar**?*

3. Scientific inventions

*It would be difficult to imagine life without **the telephone**.*

*It would be very difficult these days to live life without **video/ email**.*

THE + adjective/ verb

THE + adjective → personal noun

- ***The unemployed*** are calling for more government spending.
- ***The wounded*** were taken to the nearest hospital.
- ***The British*** are said to be very unfriendly.
- ***The accused*** is a young man with two previous convictions for robbery.

THE + adjective

THE + adjective → abstract noun

- *Out with **the old**, bring in **the new**.*
- *This is **the ultimate** in the chocolate cake.*
- ***The unknown** is often very frightening.*
- *into the open, for the common good, out of the ordinary, in the extreme, on the loose, to the full*

Summary of Article Uses

| | singular countable | plural countable | uncountable |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| definite (known) | THE (specific) | THE (specific) | THE (specific) |
| indefinite (not known) | A / AN (not specific) | zero (general) | zero (general) |

Special Uses

- **THE** or **Zero** with places

*I met her at **college**.*

*I'll meet you at **the college**. (I'll meet you at college.)*

*Jane's in **hospital**.*

*I left my coat in **the hospital** when I visited Jane.*

Special Uses

- A noun used **AFTER A GENITIVE** is accompanied by **ZERO** article

the coat that belongs to John = John's coat

(NOT ~~*John's the coat*~~ or ~~*the John's coat*~~)

- The genitive noun itself may have an article

*the wife of the boss = **the** boss's wife*

- **the** ... OF + **a**

*Lying by the side of the road we saw **the wheel of a car**.*

- Noun modifiers: the article of the first noun is dropped

guitar lessons = lessons in how to play the guitar

Special Uses

A/ AN or **THE** with proper nouns

- *We met on **a wet Tuesday** five years ago.*
- *She died on **the Wednesday** after the accident.*
- *There's **a Jane** working at the reception.*
- *That's not **the Adam Smith** I went to school with.*
- ***The late Michael Jackson** was very famous for his songs of peace.*
- ***The artist Joseph Turner** was a romantic landscape painter.*
- ***The Robinsons** are away this weekend.*

Special Uses

Jobs and positions

- *She's **an architect**.*
- ***Queen Elizabeth** had dinner with **President Kennedy**.*
- ***The Queen** had dinner with **the President**.*
- *He was elected (**the**) **President** in 1879.*
- *I want to see **the President**.*

Illnesses

- *I think I've got (**the**) **measles**.*
- *I'm getting **toothache**. (American English: a toothache)*
- EXCEPTION: **a cold, a headache**

Basic Uses of A/AN

- With singular countable nouns
- Unknown persons/ things
 - *She has **a** car.*
- What somebody/ something is
 - *I'm **an** engineer.*
- Anyone/ anything
 - ***A** vegetarian doesn't eat meat.*

Basic Uses of THE

- With singular countable nouns, plural countable nouns, uncountable nouns
- Known persons/ things
 - *They have a daughter and a son. **The** boy is a student and **the** girl is...*
- Uniqueness
 - ***The** earth is not a safe place to live anymore.*
- General sense
 - THE + noun referring to animals and plants
 - THE + adjective
 - THE + nationality
 - THE + scientific invention
 - THE + musical instrument