



Explanations

Basic uses of articles are assumed known.

Definite article

- **Classes**
This is one way to refer to classes, and is perhaps more formal than using a plural:
The tiger is threatened with extinction.
- **National groups**
Groups as a whole:
The French eat in restaurants more than the English.
Single examples are not formed in the same way:
A Frenchman/woman, an Englishman/woman.
- **Other groups**
If these are clearly plural:
the Social Democrats, The Rolling Stones
Note the difference:
Pink Floyd, Queen (no article)
- **Unique objects**
the moon, the sun
Note that there are other suns and moons in the universe.
This planet has a small moon.
- **Titles**
These tend to be 'unique'.
The director of studies
If the title is post-modified (has a description coming after the noun), *the* is more likely, but not essential. Compare:
She became President in 1998.
She became (the) President of the United States in 1998.
- **Other titles**
The may be part of the title, and so is capitalised.
Newspapers: *The Independent, The Sunday Times*
- **Musical instruments**
Jane plays the flute.
The guitar is my favourite instrument.
It is, of course, still possible to use *a* where it would naturally be used.
There was a small brown flute in the window of the shop.

- **Emphatic use**
This is heavily stressed and emphasises the following noun.
*This hotel is **the** place to stay.*
See also Grammar 14.
- **Geographical names**
The following use *the*:
Rivers: *the Thames*
Mountain ranges: *the Alps*
Oceans: *the Mediterranean*
Unique features: *the Channel, the Arctic*
Compass points/areas: *the East, the Middle East*
Countries: collective or plural: *The United Kingdom, The Netherlands*
This does not apply to:
Mountain peaks: *Everest* (but *The Matterhorn*)
Continents: *Asia*
Countries: *France*
The definite article is sometimes used before Lebanon and Gambia:
The Lebanon The Gambia
- **Place names**
Post-modification, especially with ... *of*... plays a role in place names.
Compare:
Leeds University/The University of Leeds
London Bridge/The Tower of London ->
If the first part of a place-name is another name, then normal rules about zero article apply.
Brown's Restaurant
The Garden House Hotel
The same applies in geographical names:
Canvey Island
The Isle of Man
- **Most and the most**
***Most** hotels in England are very expensive,* (making a generalisation)
*This is **the most expensive** hotel in town,* (talking about a specific hotel)
- **Importance of context**
The definite article refers to already mentioned items, and so its use depends on context.
*The Smiths had a son and a daughter. The son was in the Army and **the** daughter was training to be a doctor.*
*On **the** Saturday, there was a terrible storm.*
Here, *the Saturday* refers to a day in an area of time already mentioned.
*On the Saturday **of that week** ...*

Indefinite article

- Jobs
Compare: *Tony is a builder. Tony was the builder of that house.*
- In measuring
*Three times a week. Fifty kilometres an hour.
£3.50 a kilo. £15,000 a year.*
Formally, *per* can replace *a/an*.
- Unknown people
Use of *a/an* emphasises that a person is unknown.
A Mr Jones called while you were out.

Zero article

- Names
Compare:
*Matthew Smith is one of my favourite artists, (a person)
A Matthew Smith hangs in their bedroom, (a painting)*
- Some unique organisations do not use *the*.
Parliament, but The (House of) Commons
- Streets
Most streets do not use an article.
Green Road Godwin Street
Exceptions are:
^ *The High Street The Strand*
and street names without preceding adjectives. Compare:
Holly Drive The Drive

Translation problems

Study these sentences. Would you use an article in your language?

I know how to use a computer.
A pound and a half of cheese.
I was holding it in my hand.
It's a film about homeless people.
Terry has flu. I've got a headache.

Practice

The activities include revision material.

In each space put *a/an* or *the*, or leave the space *blank*.

It has been announced that for (1) the third consecutive month there has been (2).....rise in (3).....number of (4).....people unemployed, rather than (5).....fall that had been predicted. (6).....rise was blamed on (7).....continuing uncertainty over (8).....government economic policy, and couldn't come at (9).....worse time for (10).....Prime Minister, who is facing (11).....growing criticism over (12).....way (13).....present crisis is being handled. (14).....MPs are increasingly voicing (15).....fears that despite (16).....recent devaluation of (17).....pound and cuts in (18).....interest rates, (19).....government still expects (20).....recovery of the economy to take three or even four years. To make (21).....matters worse, (22).....number of small businesses going into (23).....liquidation is still at (24).....record level, and (25).....housing market is showing no signs of recovery. Some backbenchers expect (26).....general election before (27).....end of (28).....winter unless there is (29).....rapid change of (30).....fortune.

2 Underline the most suitable option. A dash (-) means that no article is included.

- a) Helen doesn't like *the/-* cream cakes sold in *a/the* local bakery.
- b) *The/-* handball is fast becoming *a/the* popular sport worldwide.
- c) We could see that *the/-* Alps were covered in *the/-* snow.
- d) It's *a/-* long time since I met *a/-* lovely person like you!
- e) Diana has *a/-* degree in *the/-* engineering from *the/-* University of London.
- f) At *the/-* present moment, *the/-* man seems to have *the/an* uncertain future.
- g) *The/-* problem for *the/-* today's students is how to survive financially,
- h) *The/-* French enjoy spending holidays in *the/-* countryside.
- i) Please do not turn on *a/the* water-heater in *a/the* bathroom,
- j) Sue bought *a/the* Picasso I was telling you about *the/-* last week.

Correct the errors in these sentences.

- a) It's not a first-class accommodation unless it has a private bathroom.
It's not first-class accommodation unless it has a private bathroom.
- b) On this record twins play piano duet.
- c) The halfway through meal we realised what waiter had said.
- d) If the Mrs Hillier phones, say I'm away on trip.
- e) There is a wonderful scenery in eastern part of Turkey.
- f) Cocker spaniel is one of most popular pet dogs.
- g) There is going to be fog and a cold weather all the next week.
- h) I spent very interesting holiday at the Lake Coniston in England.
- i) We are against war in general, so of course we are against war like this between superpower and developing country.
- j) The burglaries are definitely on increase.

In each space put *a/an* or *the*, or leave the space *blank*.

- a) I'm going to stand for Parliament at *the* next election.
- b) When I left station, I had to stand in queue for taxi for long time.
- c) We took trip around London and saw Tower Bridge.
- d) happiness of the majority depends on hard work for everyone.
- e) most main roads in this part of country follow line of roads built by Romans.
- f) Have you got latest record by Gipsy Kings?
- g) If I had time, I would like to take up archery.
- h) We spent pleasant evening having drinks at Robin Hood.
- i) Nile flows right through city.
- j) summer I spent in USA was one of best in my life.

- 5 In each space put *a/an* or *the*, or leave the space *blank*.



- a) She was the first woman to cross Atlantic in
.....canoe.
- b) Go down.....High Street and turn right into.....Mill
Road.
- c) Please let me carry.....shopping. It's.....least I can do.
- d) I don't like.....milk in.....coffee.
- e) At.....end of.....busy day,.....sleep is
.....best tonic.
- f).....James Joyce I knew wasn't.....novelist and wasn't
.....Irish either.
- g) We'll go for.....walk if.....sun comes out.
- h) This is.....last time I do you.....favour for a while.
- i) I'm staying in.....Hilton so you can leave me.....
message.

- 6 There are ten extra appearances of *the* in the following text. Underline them.

The word processor and the calculator are without a shadow of doubt here to stay, and in the many respects our lives are the much richer for them. But the teachers and other academics are claiming that we are now starting to feel the first significant wave of their effects on a generation of the users. It seems nobody under the age of 20 can spell or add up any more. Even several professors at leading universities have commented on the detrimental effect the digital revolution has had on the most intelligent young minds in the country. The problem, evidently, lies with the automatic spellcheck now widely available on the word processing software. Professor John Silver of the Sydney University, Australia, said: 'Why should we bother to learn how to spell correctly, or for that matter to learn even the most basic of the mathematical sums, when at the press of a button we have our problem answered for us. The implications are enormous. Will the adults of the future look to the computer to make the decisions for them, to tell them who to marry or what the house to buy? Are we heading for a future individual incapable of the independent human thought?'

7 In each space put *a/an* or *the*, or leave the space *blank*.

- a) Please watch the cabin attendant as she demonstratesuse of.....oxygen mask.
- b) Paul spent.....half of his life in.....Far East.
- c) You have to use at.....least.....pint and.....half of milk.
- d) Dick has.....sore throat and is taking.....medicine.
- e) We arranged.....accommodation on.....outskirts ofcity.
- f) There is.....very difficult crossword in '.....Times'.
- g) Could you give me.....information I asked for in.....letter I sent you?
- h) I bought.....jewellery for my sister but it wasn't.....kind she likes,
- i) I always wanted to be.....astronaut but.....ambition wore off.
- j) And.....last of all, don't forget to put.....cat out fornight.



o **Underline the most suitable option. A dash (-) means that no article is needed.**

- a) Brenda is the/- ideal for a/the job. She has a/- wealth of the/- experience.
- b) The/- safety at the/- work is a/- major concern for us.
- c) The/- poorest people in the/- country live in this city.
- d) Have you seen a/the new 'Hamlet' at the/- National Theatre?
- e) There is a/- beautiful countryside within an/- easy reach of a/the hotel.
- f) I have a/- terrible cold and am staying in the/- bed today.
- g) I earn £3 an/the hour as a/- supermarket cashier on the/- Saturdays,
- h) The/- charge for an/- excess luggage is £10 a/the kilo.
- i) The/- most of the/- life is a/- matter of getting on with the/- others,
- j) This country is officially called The/- United Kingdom of The/- Great Britain and The/- Northern Ireland.