

Articles: *a/an* or *the*

4 Write the numbers of appropriate examples in the spaces.

A/an or *the*

We usually use *a/an* to classify people or things when we mention them first . We use *the* to identify people or things when we think they are already known .

- 1 We read **a** story about **a** man, **a** young Irish girl and **a** priceless diamond ring.
- 2 Do you remember **the** story about **the** man who tried to steal **the** ring from **the** Irish girl?

A/an: classifying

When we classify something, we are saying that it is a member of a category. We use *a/an* when we classify the kind of thing we're talking about or when we want to talk about any example of the kind of thing we're talking about .

- 3 What's that? ~ It's **a** mouse. • His first film was **a** comedy. (NOT ~~His first film was comedy.~~)
- 4 Do you have **a** ruler? • I'm looking for **a** knife. (NOT ~~I'm looking for knife.~~)

We use *a/an* when we classify people by the work they do or the kind of beliefs they have .

- 5 I'm **a** socialist, not **a** communist. • Isn't your friend Voltra **a** vegetarian?
- 6 Sheila's **an** architect. • Stanley talks like **an** engineer. • I'm **a** student. (NOT ~~I'm student.~~)

We can use *a/an* when we classify things in definitions , in descriptions of particular features and with a proper noun for one example of the type of thing mentioned .

- 7 That painting is **a** Picasso. • Have you driven **a** Mercedes? • Is your watch **a** Calvin Klein?
- 8 The professor had **a** big nose, **a** small mouth and **an** enormous moustache.
- 9 Is **a** tomato **a** fruit or **a** vegetable? • A dolphin isn't **a** fish, it's **a** mammal.

The: identifying

When we identify something, we are treating it as already known. We use *the* when we assume that people are familiar with the same ordinary things as we are in our daily lives and in the physical world outside .

- 10 Please don't mention **the** sun, **the** sky, **the** earth, **the** weather or **the** environment today.
- 11 Where's **the** phone? I left it beside **the** radio on **the** table in **the** corner near **the** window.

We use *the* when we identify people by their jobs or their unique roles in society . We also use *the* with professional organizations .

- 12 Will you wait for **the** plumber? ~ I can't. • I have to go to **the** dentist. • Ask **the** caretaker.
- 13 He's thinking about joining **the** police or **the** army. • His brother works for **the** government.
- 14 Would you recognize **the** Pope, **the** Emperor of Japan, **the** Dalai Lama or **the** Queen?

We can use *the* when we want to talk about something as a general concept and we're not referring to a specific example. We do this with inventions and musical instruments and with people, things and animals in generalizations .

- 15 **The** horse was a symbol of freedom to **the** Apache. • **The** customer isn't always right.
(= any customer)
- 16 What was life like before **the** computer? • Can anyone here play **the** piano or **the** organ?

We use *the* when we identify things or parts of things with descriptive phrases after the noun, especially prepositional phrases with *of* and relative clauses . We also put *the* before superlative adjectives and emphasizing adjectives such as *main* or *first* .

- 17 **The** best part was being **the** first person to get in. That was **the** main reason for going early.
- 18 Can I see **the** book that you bought? • **The** person who called yesterday said you owed him £20.
- 19 It's **the** middle of June already and I haven't finished painting **the** front of my house.

5 Complete these descriptions with *a*, *an*, *the* or no article (–).

The Channel Islands are *a* group of – islands in (1) – English Channel near (2) – north-western coast of (3) – France. They have belonged to (4) – Britain since (5) – Normans arrived in (6) – 11th century, although they are not part of (7) – United Kingdom.

Charlie Chaplin was (8) – English film actor. He was also (9) – director. He did most of his work in (10) – USA. Many people consider him (11) – greatest comic actor of (12) – silent cinema. He appeared in many films as (13) – poor man with (14) – small round hat, (15) – small moustache and (16) – trousers and (17) – shoes that were too big for him, causing him to walk in (18) – funny way.

6 Choose an answer (a–f) for each question (1–6) and add *a* or *the*.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 How often have you done this? (...) | a It's on – bottom shelf of my bookcase. |
| 2 What exactly is an olive? (...) | b I think he's in – navy. |
| 3 Where's your dictionary? (...) | c She'd like to be – journalist. |
| 4 Why is it so bright outside tonight? (...) | d I'm sure it's – fruit. |
| 5 What kind of career does Sally want? (...) | e It must be – moon. |
| 6 What does Mrs Reynolds' son do? (...) | f Yesterday was actually – first time. |

7 Complete this news item with *a*, *an*, *the* or no article (–).

There's (1) – giant tortoise in (2) – Galapagos Islands nicknamed (3) – Lonesome George who has never found (4) – mate. Recent studies by scientists suggest that (5) – lonely tortoise, now living on (6) – Pinto Island, actually belongs to (7) – species from (8) – island of (9) – Espanola. (10) – scientists plan to bring (11) – female from Espanola to see if (12) – George will become interested in mating.

8 Editing. Correct the mistakes in the use of articles in this text.

I remember ^a really embarrassing moment when I was starting to learn the English. My teacher's name was Trevor Jones. He was from Cardiff in the Wales. He was always making the jokes. One day he wrote words 'English Gramer' on blackboard. He asked us if that was correct. Immediately I offered to answer question. I told him the E should be changed to the A. Trevor said that was good answer and he changed letter. Then he asked me if I was happy with new spelling. With the absolute confidence, I said that it was now correct. Suddenly, the other students started laughing. I looked around in the confusion. My friend whispered that it needed second M. 'Oh, it should have the M too!' I shouted out and Trevor nodded with the smile. It was correct. But I still remember terrible feeling of the embarrassment from that moment.

A/an or one, a/an or no article, the or no article

A/an or one

We can use *a/an* or *one* before a noun to talk about a single thing or person.

- 1 *In some places, there are graves that are used again after **one/a** year and **one/a** day.*

We use *one* to emphasize the number (*only one* or *just one*) (2) or to talk about a particular but unspecified occasion, usually in narrative (3).

- 2 *We only have room for **one** passenger. • He tried to balance on **one** leg, but he fell over.*
3 ***One** day there was a terrible storm. • **One** time we almost had an accident.*

We use *one* in exact numbers, especially in phrases with larger numbers (4). We use *a/an* in approximate amounts and fractions (5).

- 4 *Our first car cost **one** thousand, **one** hundred and twenty pounds. • Add **one** cup of flour.*
5 *That trip cost almost **a** hundred pounds. • It took about **a** day and **a** half to complete.*

A/an or no article

We use *a/an* when we are thinking of something as a single unit (6). We use no article when something is not a single unit or it is uncountable (7).

- 6 *Would you like **a** coffee? • We have started **a** new research project. • Look! I caught **a** fish!*
7 *Do you prefer coffee or tea? • He's doing research on fish or shellfish. (NOT ~~He's doing a research~~ ...)*

We use *a/an* before a noun to talk about a single example or instance of a more general thing (8) and no article when we are talking about the general concept (9).

- 8 *We bought **a** cheap wine. • I have **a** terrible fear of heights. • The old man had **a** good life.*
9 *I hate cheap wine. • Fear of death can affect anyone. • Life is beautiful, so enjoy it!*

The or no article

We use *the* for a specific meaning (10) and no article for a general meaning (11) before plural nouns such as *dogs* and uncountable nouns such as *money*.

- 10 ***The dogs** next door are friendly. • The children have already spent **the money** we gave them.*
11 *My sister is afraid of **dogs**. • Michelle's boyfriend is always talking about **money**.*

We use *the* with nouns such as *history* or *poetry* when they are followed by *of*-phrases (12) and no article in other contexts (13).

- 12 ***The poetry** of Philip Larkin is unusual. • We studied **the history** of Scotland.*
13 ***Poetry** isn't their favourite subject. • He taught us Scottish **history**. (NOT ~~He taught us the Scottish history~~.)*

We can use *the* with nouns to talk about a specific time (14) or place (15) and no article with those same nouns after the prepositions *in* or *at* when we're talking more generally (16).

- 14 *That was **the Christmas** before you were born. • Did you hear that noise during **the night**?*
15 *After you pass **the school**, you'll see **the church**. • **The prison** is a big red building.*
16 *Most people would rather be in **school** or in **church** than in **prison**. • I can never study at **night**.*
Other prepositional phrases like this include: at Christmas, at university, in town, in winter

We use no article in many prepositional phrases referring to general concepts, as in *going by bus*, where there isn't a particular bus being classified or identified (17). We also use no article when we talk about sports (18).

- 17 *They came by bus. • Let's go to bed. • Send it by email. (NOT ~~Send it by the email~~.)*
18 *Anwar loves cricket. • Tennis is her favourite sport. • I don't play golf. (NOT ~~I don't play the golf~~.)*

9 Complete this text with *a/an*, *one* or *no article* (–).

One time I went out on a blind date with (1) man who had just started working in Cathy's office. That was (2) big mistake! We went to (3) cocktail bar. There was only (4) free table, in the darkest corner of the bar. He asked if I'd like (5) screwdriver. Well, I know there's (6) tool called (7) screwdriver, but I'd never heard of (8) drink called that. He explained that it was made with (9) vodka and (10) orange juice. I said I'd rather have (11) glass of (12) white wine. He said he had (13) very special white wine from France in his flat and I would really like it. He gulped back his drink and asked if I was ready for another drink before we left. I said I could only stay for (14) drink. When he went to the bathroom, I quickly grabbed my coat and left. Maybe it was called (15) 'blind' date, but I could see very clearly where it was going. I had to make (16) quick exit.

10 Using a dictionary if necessary, complete these definitions with *a*, *an*, *the* or *no article* (–).

A Christmas tree is (1) evergreen or artificial tree decorated with (2) lights and (3) coloured ornaments in (4) people's homes at (5) Christmas.
 An Easter egg is (6) egg made of (7) chocolate or (8) hen's egg with (9) painted shell, given as (10) present to (11) children at (12) Easter.
 Passover is (13) Jewish religious festival in (14) memory of (15) freeing of (16) Jews from (17) slavery in (18) Egypt.
 Ramadan is (19) ninth month of (20) Muslim year, when (21) Muslims do not eat or drink anything between (22) sunrise and (23) sunset.
 Thanksgiving (Day) is (24) public holiday in (25) USA, on (26) fourth Thursday in (27) November, and in (28) Canada, on (29) second Monday in (30) October.

11 Complete this news report with *a*, *an*, *one*, *the* or *no article* (–).

John Millar, who lives near (1) Stirling in (2) central Scotland, thought he had found (3) bargain when he bought (4) Volkswagen for just (5) thousand, (6) hundred and sixty-five pounds at (7) auction in (8) April this year. Everything was fine for about (9) month, then (10) day, (11) car just stopped. John took it to (12) local garage where (13) mechanic thought there was (14) problem with (15) petrol supply. He was really surprised when he discovered (16) source of (17) problem. He had to remove (18) large, tightly-sealed plastic bag from (19) petrol tank. Inside (20) bag was (21) wad of (22) hundred pound notes. It amounted to fifteen thousand pounds. Suddenly, (23) Volkswagen was (24) even bigger bargain than John had imagined. But John is (25) honest Scot and he reported his discovery to (26) police. They are now trying to find (27) car's previous owner because they want to know where (28) money came from and why it was hidden. John is waiting patiently and hoping that it will eventually be his. When that happens, he won't have to worry about (29) money for (30) petrol for quite some time.