

6 Articles and nouns

Nouns are either proper, with a capital letter (*Shakespeare*), or common, without a capital letter (*poet*). Some common nouns are countable and can be singular (*woman, poet*) or plural (*women, poets*). Other common nouns are uncountable and are not used in the plural (*poetry, weather*).

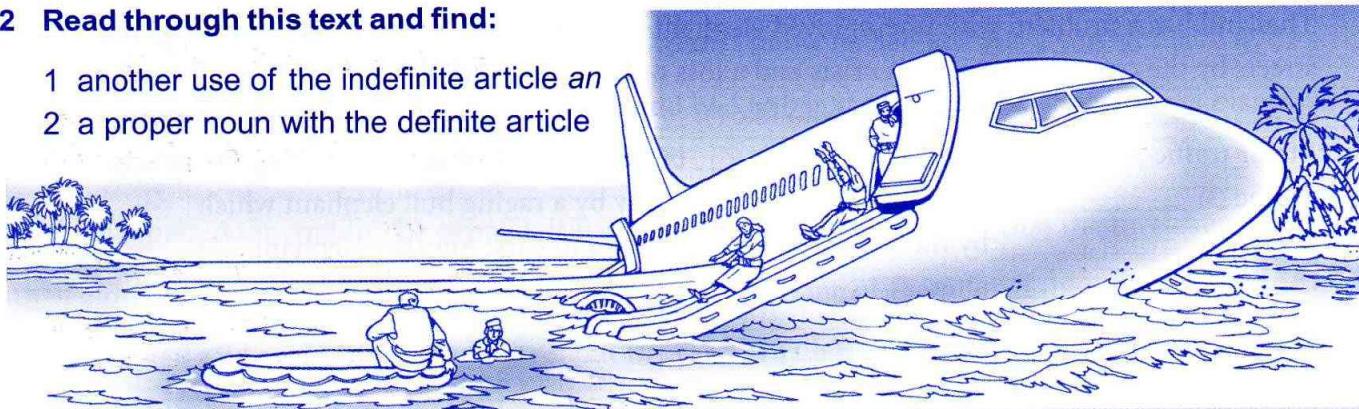
With nouns, we can use an indefinite article (*a poet, an old woman*), a definite article (*the weather, the women*), or no article (*We're studying poetry written by women*).

1 Read these statements and choose what you think is the best answer.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1 A person is more likely to die in a car accident than an aircraft accident. | True / False |
| 2 It is safer to fly in a newer plane than in an older plane. | True / False |
| 3 A smaller plane is much safer than a larger plane. | True / False |
| 4 The chance of being killed in a major airline crash is close to one in 8 / 18 / 80 million. | 8 / 18 / 80 million. |
| 5 Airplane accidents rarely occur during the take-off and landing. | True / False |
| 6 The more stops in a flight, the more dangerous it will be. | True / False |
| 7 The likelihood of surviving an aircraft accident is about 8 / 18 / 80 per cent. | 8 / 18 / 80 per cent. |
| 8 Natural materials are safer than synthetic materials if there is a fire. | True / False |

2 Read through this text and find:

- 1 another use of the indefinite article *an*
- 2 a proper noun with the definite article



Flying in modern jets is one of the safest forms of transportation. It has been estimated that travelling by air is twenty-five times safer than travelling by car. This means that you are much more likely to get killed driving to or from the airport than during the flight.

The safest planes are the large modern jets of the major commercial airlines of Europe and the United States. One study showed that the chance of being killed in a commercial airline crash was only one in eight million. Smaller planes, commuter planes and older planes are far more likely to be involved in accidents.

Most airplane accidents occur during the take-off and landing parts of a flight. It follows that a non-stop flight will be safer than a flight with one or more stops. The duration of the flight doesn't seem to be a factor.

- 20 It is estimated that eighty per cent of the people involved in an aircraft accident survive. You can increase your chances of survival by knowing what to do before an accident occurs. Keep your seat belt fastened at all times.
- 25 Identify the nearest emergency exit and count the number of seats between you and the exit. You may have to feel your way to the exit in the dark. Learn how to open the emergency door in case you are the first person to reach it. Wear clothes made from natural fibres such as cotton and wool rather than synthetic materials which may burn or melt on the skin. Think about carrying a smoke hood with you on the plane. If there is a fire, the hood can help
- 30 protect you against smoke and toxic gases. Above all, don't panic.

Types of articles and nouns

Articles

We use the definite article *the* with singular and plural nouns.

- 1 *The names of the authors of the books on the top shelf begin with the letter 'A'.*

We use the indefinite article *a/an* with singular nouns. Choosing *a* or *an* depends on the first sound, not letter, of the next word. We use *a* before consonant sounds (2) and *an* before vowel sounds (3).

- 2 *Have a banana! • Is this a one-way street? • I need a holiday. • Write a 'U', then a 'P'.*

- 3 *Have an apple! • Is this an old Rolls Royce? • He has an honest face. • Write an 'N', then an 'O'.*

We sometimes use nouns without articles.

- 4 *Do you take milk or sugar? • I like fish, but not chips. • Girls are quicker than boys.*

The articles *a/an* and *the* are types of determiners. (See page 83.) We can use other determiners (*this*, *those*, *my*, *your*, etc.) instead of articles, but not with them.

- 5 *These books belong on that shelf. • Nora wiped her cheek. (NOT ~~Nora wiped her the cheek.~~)*

Nouns

We begin proper nouns with capital letters and use them as the names of people, places, organizations, days, months and special occasions. Most of them have no article (6). But we use some proper nouns with the definite article in the plural (7) and some in the singular (8).

- 6 *Elvis Presley, Shakespeare, Denmark, Rome, NATO, Microsoft, Monday, July, Christmas*

- 7 *the Robertsons, the Arabs, the Alps, the Netherlands, the United Nations, the Middle Ages*

- 8 *the Queen, the United Kingdom, the BBC, the Eiffel Tower, the White House, the Gulf War*

We use common nouns to categorize or label people and things. They are countable or uncountable. We can use countable common nouns in the singular, with *a/an* and *each* (9), or in the plural, with numbers and *many* (10).

- 9 *Do you have a black pen or a pencil? • Each child should have a book.*

- 10 *We don't sell pens or pencils. • There are twenty children. • How many books will you need?*

We usually use uncountable common nouns when we talk about an abstract concept, an activity, a substance or a material. Uncountable nouns are not used with *a/an* or in the plural. We can use uncountable nouns with no article (11) and *much* (12).

- 11 *Her poem is about flying, freedom and bad luck. (NOT ... a-bad luck.)*

- 12 *They have food and clothing, but they don't have much water. (NOT ... waters.)*

Uncountable nouns are also called non-count nouns or mass nouns.

3 Complete this table with appropriate examples from the text about flying on page 68.

Proper nouns	Indefinite article <i>a Rolls-Royce</i> <i>an Audi</i>	Definite article <i>the United Kingdom</i> <i>the United States</i>	No article <i>Shakespeare</i> (1)
Common nouns Countable: singular	<i>an accident</i> (2)	<i>the shelf</i> (3)	<i>(by) bus</i> (4)
Countable: plural		<i>the books</i> (5)	<i>children</i> (6)
Uncountable		<i>the food</i> (7)	<i>clothing</i> (8)

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.

Alan 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.