

Articles

Use the definite article, the:

- with singular or plural nouns, when you expect the person who is listening to know which person or thing you are talking about:
 - ▶ *Thank you for the flowers* (= the ones that you brought me).
 - ▶ *This is the CD I told you about.*
- with the names of oceans, rivers, groups of islands or mountains, deserts:
 - ▶ *The Thames goes through Oxford and London.*
 - ▶ *Where are the Seychelles?*
 - ▶ *He was the first person to row across the Atlantic.*
- when talking about playing musical instruments:
 - ▶ *I've been learning the piano for four years.*

NOTE **The** is not usually used when you are talking about modern music such as jazz, rock, etc.:

- ▶ *He plays bass in a band.*

Use the indefinite article, a/an:

- when the other person does not know which person or thing you are talking about or when you are not referring to a particular person or thing:
 - ▶ *He's got a new bike.* (I haven't mentioned it before.)
 - ▶ *Could you bring me a knife?* (Any knife will be okay.)
- when talking about a type or class of people or things, such as when you mention a person's job:
 - ▶ *She's an accountant.*
 - ▶ *He works as a waiter.*
- in prices, speeds, etc.:
 - ▶ *The top speed is 70 kilometres an hour.*
 - ▶ *I go to the gym three times a week.*
- sometimes with hundred, thousand, million, etc.:
 - ▶ *He won a thousand pounds on the lottery.*

NOTE **A/an** is used only with singular countable nouns.

A is used before a consonant sound, **an** before a vowel sound:

- ▶ *a shirt, a house, a euro, a URL*
- ▶ *an eagle, an hour, an MP*

Use no article:

- with uncountable nouns or with countable nouns in the plural, when you are talking in general:
 - ▶ *I love flowers.* (all flowers)
 - ▶ *Honey is sweet.* (all honey)
 - ▶ *Are nurses well paid here?* (nurses in general)
- with most names of countries, counties, states, streets, towns or lakes:
 - ▶ *I'm going to Turkey.*
 - ▶ *She's from Yorkshire.*
 - ▶ *They live in Iowa.*
 - ▶ *Toronto is on Lake Ontario.*
 - ▶ *We've bought a house in Harpes Road.*
- with the names of religions:
 - ▶ *Christianity has its roots in Judaism.*
- with a person's title when the name is mentioned:
 - ▶ *President Kennedy*
BUT **the** *President of the United States*
 - ▶ *Doctor Jones*
- with the words for meals, months and days of the week:
 - ▶ *Why don't you come for dinner?*
 - ▶ *See you on Tuesday.*
 - ▶ *She was born in December.*

NOTE Articles are used when you are describing a particular meal, month or day:

- ▶ *The lunch they provided was excellent.*
- ▶ *We set off on a sunny Tuesday in August.*

- when a school, prison, jail or court is being referred to as an institution:
 - ▶ *When do the children finish school?*
 - ▶ *He was sent to prison for two years.*

NOTE **The** is used when you are talking about a particular building:

- ▶ *I'll meet you outside the school.*

Use a possessive (not an article):

- when talking about possessions or parts of the body:
 - ▶ *She sprained her ankle and broke her arm.*
 - ▶ *I've left my phone on the bus.*
 - ▶ *Where did I leave my car?*
 - ▶ *He's had his hair cut.*

→ For more information about the use of articles, look at the notes at the entries for **HOSPITAL** and **COLLEGE**.