

# THE ARTICLES

## A. The Definite Articles (THE)

1. *Do not put **the** before the name of substances if they are used in a general sense.*

i. *Gold is a precious metal ...(not the gold)*

ii. *Bread is made from flour. .... (not the bread ...the flour)*

iii. *Lead is very heavy.... (not the lead)*

- But ***the*** must be used if the reference is to a particular kind or specimen of the substance.
  - i. The gold *mined here* is of poor quality.
  - ii. They were grateful for the bread *we gave them*.
  - iii. *Thieves stole* the lead from the roof.
- ***Similarly :***  
sand, butter, cheese, milk, grass, meat, paper, rice.

- The nature of the particular kind or specimen need not always be stated; it may sometimes be *understood from the situation, or from what has been said previously.*

i. If you will pay for the bread, I will pay for the meat.

- (i.e., the bread and the meat that we need, or that we have recently had.)

2. Do not put **the** before the **names of meals** if they refer to the *meals generally*, as a part of the daily routine.

i. Breakfast is at eight O'clock.... *(not the breakfast)*

ii. When do you have dinner? ... *(not the dinner)*

iii. Have you had lunch yet? ... *(not the lunch)*

- But **the** must be used:
  - a. When the meal is a *particular one*, thought of as a social function.
    - i. The dinner will be held at Grand Hotel.
  - b. When the name of the meal refers to the food rather than the occasion.
    - i. We enjoyed **the** breakfast *she gave us*.
    - ii. **The** dinner was *not properly cooked*.

- **N.B.** The name of a meal *may be preceded by a possessive adjective* (**my, your, his her, their, its**) if we wish to give it a personal application.
  - i. I was having **my** *lunch* when they arrived.
  - ii. She always has **her** *breakfast* in bed.
  - iii. It's time I gave this dog **its** *dinner*.

3. Do not put **the** before plural nouns when they are used in *general or a universal* sense.

i. Apples are grown in many different countries. *(not the apples.)*

ii. Books are essential to a student. *(not the book)*

i. Aeroplanes can fly very fast. *(not the aeroplane)*

➤ **But** if the reference to particular ones, then the must be used.

- i. The apples of our tree are not yet ripe.
- ii. The books you gave me will be most useful.

4. Do not put **the** before the **names of games**.

i. I play *football*. .....(not *the football*)

ii. *Chess* is the game which requires great skill and patience. ... (not *the chess*)



*Similarly:*

Cricket, rugby, tennis, hockey, polo, baseball, cards, ludo.



5. Do not put **the** before the names of country  
**unless** the name suggests that the country is  
made up of *smaller units or constituent parts*.
- i. France, India, Germany, China, and Ghana are  
all republics.

**But:**

- i. The united States is one of the great world  
powers.

*Similarly*, the following must have the article:

The United Kingdom, The Soviet Union, The  
U.S.A. The Netherlands.

- *An articles is also necessary if* the name of the country is preceded by the word:

Kingdom, Republic, Protectorate, Federation.

- **The** Republic of South Africa.
- **The** Kingdom of Macedon.

6. Do not use *the* before the words:

**King and Queen** *if* they are followed by the names of the King or Queen.

- **King** George V
- **Queen** Elizabeth II

The same is applied to **Pope**

**Pope John** (**not** the Pope John)

**7. The** may be used before a name which ends in *Road*, but it also be omitted.

- I bought this watch at a shop in the Edgware Road.

*Or*

- I bought this watch at a shop in Edgware Road.

**But** it must **not be used** before names ending in: *Street, Avenue, Crescent or Lane*: *nor* is it used before the name of the *square*.

- i. There are many large shops in Oxford **Street**. ...(not the Oxford Street.)
- ii. Nelson's monument is in Trafalgar **Square**. ...(not the Trafalgar Square)

8. Put **the** before nouns which *name the inhabitants of country collectively or as a community*, but **not** before names of their language.

- i. The French live in France, and Portuguese in Portugal. ....(not French live in France, and Portuguese in Portugal)
- ii. The Russian sent up the first earth satellite. (not Russians sent up....)

**Similarly:** the British, the Chinese, the Germans,  
the Indians, the Dutch

- The *inhabitant of France* speaks French (not the French)

9. Put **the** before the names of mountain ranges or ranges of hills, **but not** before the names of single mountains or hills.

- The Alps, the Himalayas, the Pyrenees, the Pennines, the Cotswolds.

**But:** Everest, Mont Blanc, Snowdon (not the Everest, etc.

10. Use **the** before **the** names of :

rivers, canal, seas, oceans, valleys, deserts and forests.

- i. London is on the Thames
- ii. Many ships use the Kiel Canal

- **But** when the name of river forms part of the name of a town that stands on it, the is not used.

- Stratford-upon-Avon,
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
- Kingston-on-Thames,

11. Use **the** before the names of: *municipal or government departments and before the names of shops, business houses, industrial concerns, banks etc.*

- **The** State Bank, **The** Ministry of Education, **The** Public Library, **The** Grand Hotel, **The** War Office.

- But, the names of the railway stations, when they are also place names, as most of them are, are not preceded by **the**

- *Similarly,*

Cambridge University, Sheffield University etc.,

*but*

**The** University of Cambridge, **The** University of Sheffield.

13. Use *the* before the names of ships and trains, even if they do not form part of the name itself.

- i. *The Golden Arrow* is an *express train* which runs from London to Paris each day.

- **But** when the name of a *particular type of vehicle* is used to name of a *means of travel*, there is no definite article.
  - i. We are going to London by train.
  - ii. I go to work by bus.
  - iii. The fastest means of travel is by aeroplane. (or *by air*)



- *The* is left out of the expression **all day** and **all night**, **but**
  - it should be used in similar adverbial expressions for other divisions of time:
    - i. all the morning,
    - ii. all the afternoon,
    - iii. all the evening,
    - iv. all the week.
  - i. I have worked hard *all day*.
  - ii. The nurse stayed up *all night* with the patient.
- **But:**
  - It has been raining all **the** morning.

**15.** **The** is used before a singular noun to express what we call the *generic singular* , i.e., the one thing mentioned is taken to represent all of that kind.

- i. **The** tiger and the cat belong to the same family of animals
- ii. **The** elephant is very strong.
- iii. **The** aeroplane is the fastest means of travel that is in common use.

**Note:** An exception to the above rule is the *noun man* when it is used to denote the human race as whole.

- i. Man does not live by bread alone
- ii. Man is the only creature that has developed the power of speech.

**16. Note** the *omission* of the in such expression *as*:

- i. go to school,
- ii. go to church,
- iii. go to hospital,
- iv. go to prison.

- i. The children go to school.
- ii. If you are seriously ill you will have to go to hospital.

***But:***

- i. *The stranger went to **the** school to complain about the behaviour of the pupils.*
- ii. *I am going to **the** hospital to visit a sick friend.*

## • EXERCISE

- **Fill in the blank** spaces in the following sentences with word given in brackets at the end, using either the plain noun, or the noun preceded by the (whichever you think is correct).
  - The box was made of .....(wood).**
  - Some coins are made of .....and some of.....(silver, copper).**
  - .....in that stream is not suitable for drinking. (water)**
  - .....is found in Australia and South Africa (gold)**
  - .....that we had for dinner was tough. (meat)**
  - In Britain more people drink.....than .....(tea , coffee)**
  - When do you have .....? (breakfast)**
  - There is a fish for.....today. (dinner)**

- i.** Are you attending .....tonight?
- j.** .....are grown in Spain, South Africa, Brazil and Israel.  
(orange)
- k.** We wear..... to keep us warm. (cloths)
- l.** .....are not allowed to park here. (cars)
- m.** .....in that vase are very beautiful. (flowers)
- n.** Let us have a game of .....(cricket)
- o.** She plays.....very well. (tennis)
- p.** What are we having for .....? (lunch)
- q.** .....in that field is very green. (grass)
- r.** Do you usually drink.....or.....? (tea, coffee)
- s.** She thanked me for..... I gave her. (present)
- t.** .....are used in some countries to pull heavy loads.  
(elephants)

## • EXERCISE

- **Fill in the blank** spaces in the following sentences with word given in brackets at the end, using either the plain noun, or the noun preceded by the (whichever you think is correct).
  - In Austria the people speak.....(German)**
  - .....is spoken in many countries. (English)**
  - .....have been a sea faring people for many centuries.**
  - (English)**
  - Can you speak.....? (French)**
  - .....are a very musical nation. (Italians)**
  - Many great ships cross..... (Atlantic Ocean)**
  - .....is a very large country in.....(India, Asia)**
  - His uncle is manager of .....in this town. (Overseas Bank)**
  - He came for an hour, but stayed all .....(evening)**

## • EXERCISE

- **Fill in the blank** spaces in the following sentences with the noun given in brackets at the end. Insert the before the noun wherever you think is necessary.
  - a. **He was found guilty of theft and sent to .....for six months. (prison)**
  - b. **My son will be old enough to go to.....next May. (school)**
  - c. **My wife has gone .....to visit a sick friend. (hospital)**
  - d. **He is very ill, and has to go to.....(hospital)**
  - e. **Mr. Smith and his family generally go to .....on Sunday Morning. (Church)**
  - f. **John is ill, so he cannot go to.....(school)**
  - g. **The vicar has gone to .....to inspect the damage done by the gale. (Church)**
  - h. **I must go to..... to see the headmaster. (school)**

- i. I feel tired, as I went to .....late last night. (bed )**
- j. In Britain many people do not go to .....on Saturday morning. (business)**
- k. I no longer go to .....on Saturdays. (office)**
- l. I have not been to .....for several months. (cinema)**
- m. Some of the visitors came by ....., others by ..... (train, bus)**
- n. Are you going to India by.....or by.....? (sea, air)**
- o. We sail tomorrow on (Dunbar Castle)**

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# The Indefinite Article ( a/an )

## 1. Remember that:

- i. **a** is used before *words beginning with a consonant*, and
  - ii. **an** before *words beginning with a vowel* or with a letter **h** which is *not sounded*.
- Following is a list of the chief words in English which are spelt with an unsounded h.
    - Heir, heiress, heirloom, honest, honesty, honorarium, honorary, honour, honourable, hour, hourly,

2. **A** not an must be used before words which begin with a vowel symbol pronounced with the same sound as the **y** in *yet*.

• *Such words are:*

*Europe, European, uniform, union, unique, Unitarian, united, universal, university, usual.*

i. Switzerland is a *European country*.

ii. I hope to go to a *University*.

3. Do not omit **a/an** before *a singular noun* standing for things that can be counted.

i. Rice is **a** *cereal*.

ii. London is **a** *city*.

iii. **A** *dog* is **an** *animal*.

• *A/an* must also be used when the noun is preceded by an *adjective*. In such cases it goes the adjective.

i. London is **a** *big* city....(not London is big city)

ii. **A** loin is **a** *dangerous* animal. ... (not .....is dangerous animal)

- *Not only are living creatures, plants, material objects, and natural features such as: rivers, lakes, hills and seas countable; so also are such things as: rewards, punishments, penalties and salaries.*

They must therefore have article before them when used in the singular.

- i. He was given **a** *reward* for his bravery.**
- ii. If you are promoted, you will get **a** *higher salary*.**
- iii. The court imposed **a** *heavy penalty*.**

- **A is not** normally used before **nouns standing for things** that *cannot be counted*, but it may be used before such nouns if the reference is to :

*a. A particular kind of the thing:*

- I like **a** white wine with my lunch.

**or**

*b. A particular quantity.*

- Let's go into this restaurant and have **a** coffee. (i.e. a cup of coffee)

4. The names of the **professions** *and* **occupations** the indefinite article.
- i. My brother is **a** teacher (not .....is teacher)
  - ii. I hope to be **a** doctor. (not I hope to be doctor)
- The same rule is applies to nouns such as : *Hero, Genius, Fool, Thief, Liar*. Which describe someone by telling us the *king of person* he is.
    - i. Beware of that fellow; he is **a** thief.  
(not .....he is thief)

5. The indefinite article always follow the word such when it is applied to things that are countable.

i. I have never know such **a** wet summer. (**not** *a such wet summer*)

ii. Such **a** thing has never happened before. (**not** *a such thing*)

6. If an adjective is preceded by **SO**, the *a or an* must be placed between the adjective and the noun.
- i. I have never known **so wet** **a** summer.
7. When **a** is placed before the word **few** it changes the meaning,
- **Few** means *only a small number*, when more might have been expected:
  - **a few** means *a small number when none might have been expected.*



i. **Few** pupils gave the right answer

(i.e., *I had hoped for more.*)

ii. **A few** pupils gave the right answer.

(i.e., *They did not all, as one might have supposed, give the wrong answer.*)

• There is a similar difference between **little** and **a little**.

i. We have **little** time to spare.

(i.e., not so much as should like)

ii. We have **a little** time to spare.

(i.e., we are not so short of time that we have none to spare)

# few & a few little & a little

- **Few** is used with plural nouns;
- **Little** is used with singular uncountable noun.
  - Few politicians** realize the importance of solar energy.
  - I have **little interest** in politics.
- i. Without articles, **few** and **little** usually have rather negative meanings.
- ii. They often suggest '*not as much/many as one would like*' or '*not as much/many as expected*' or a similar idea

- i. The average MP has **little** real power.
- ii. Few** people can speak a foreign language perfectly.

**A few** and **a little** are more **positive**:

- i. Their meaning is closer to 'some'.
- ii. They often suggest ideas like:
  - *'better than nothing' or*
  - *'more than expected'*
- i. Would you like **a little** champagne?

ii. You don't need to go shopping.

There are a few eggs in the fridge, and I've got a little bread and cheese—it'll be enough for supper.

*Compare:*

- i. His theory is very difficult; *few people* understand it.
- ii. His theory is very difficult, but *a few people* understand.

- Adverbs such as **only** and **just** can be used before **a few** and **a little**, but not before *few and little*.
  - i. There are *just* **a few** apples left.
  - ii. We have *only* **a little** money.
- Note that **few** and **little** (*without articles*) are unusual in an informal style.

We usually *prefer* to say: *not many, not much, only a few or only a little*.

- i. *Come on! We haven't got **much time!***
- ii. ***Only a few people** are perfectly bilingual.*

# EXERCISE-01

- Insert **a** or **an** in the blank spaces in the following sentences.
  - .....elephant is a very strong animal.
  - He had always hoped that his son would go to .....university.
  - Italy is.....European country.
  - I shall be less than.....hour.
  - Is there .....hospital in this town.
  - Everyone respects .....honest person.
  - By .....united effort we many achieve success.
  - I like to give .....useful present.
  - I understand he is to marry .....heiress.

- j. ....honour was conferred on him for his services to his country.
- k. We stayed at.....hotel in the centre of the town.
- l. It is.....great honour to be invited to such a gathering.
- m. The door was opened by.....servant.
- n. ....honorary secretary is one who is not paid for his services.
- o. He was carrying.....heavy load.
- p. There is.....hourly bus service on this route.
- q. ....big dog dashed out of the gate.
- r. We shall come if we get .....opportunity.
- s. That was not .....very honest thing to do.
- t. The proposal was accepted by .....unanimous vote.

# EXERCISE-02

- Complete the following sentences by inserting in the blank spaces the words or phrases given in brackets, either with or without the article **a (or an)** whichever *you think correct*. If you insert **a or an**, make sure you put it in the right place.
  - a. New York is .....(large city)
  - b. Bernard Show was.....(famous English dramatist)
  - c. Ice is.....(frozen water)
  - d. We have had.....(very tiring journey)
  - e. I have never known such.....(hot weather)
  - f. Have you ever seen so.....as that.
  - g. I have never heard such.....(absurd story)
  - h. We shall get.....next year. (longer holiday)



- i. It gives me .....to do it. (pleasure)
  - j. He took.....over the work. (great care)
  - k. My younger brother is ..... (student)
  - l. He hopes to become.....when he has finished his course. (teacher)
  - m. China is .....country. (very large)
  - n. John's ambition is to be..... Engineer.
  - o. I had never been in so .....before. (large house)
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# EXERCISE-03

- Insert little or a little, few or a few in the following sentences
  - a. We have only.....minutes to spare.**
  - b. Could you lend me.....books.**
  - c. He has many enemies, but....friends.**
  - d. Mr. Brown was a man of .....words.**
  - e. The ground is very dry, as there has been....rain for the past....months.**

# EXERCISE-03

- f.** A busy person has.....time to spare.
  - g.** We will stay here for .....while.
  - h.** I have spent nearly all my money, and have only.....left.
  - i.** As the matter is outside our control, there is .....we can do about it.
  - j.** You should be able to do the job if you have .....patience.
-