

Unit 17 Articles

Explanations

Definite article

Basic uses of articles are assumed known.

1 Classes

This is one way to refer to classes, and is perhaps more formal than using a plural:

The tiger is threatened with extinction.

2 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

3 Other groups

If these are clearly plural:

The Social Democrats, The Rolling Stones

Note the difference:

Pink Floyd, Queen (no article)

4 Unique objects

The moon, the sun

Note that there are other suns and moons in the universe:

This planet has a small moon.

5 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.

6 Other titles

The may be part of the title, and so is capitalised.

Newspapers: *The Independent, The Sunday Times*

Titles of books and films etc do not have *the* unless there is post-modification.

The Phantom of the Opera.

'The' is sometimes dropped in everyday speech.

Have you seen 'Phantom of the Opera'?

- 7 Musical instruments
The is included if ability to play is mentioned.
Jane plays the flute.
A description of playing might not use *the*.
Jane played a flute and Paul played a recorder.
- 8 Emphatic use
This is heavily stressed and emphasises the following noun.
This hotel is the place to stay.
See also Unit 14.
- 9 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:
lakes: *Lake Geneva*
mountain peaks: *Everest* (but *The Matterhorn*)
continents: *Asia*
countries: *France*
The definite article is sometimes used before Lebanon and Gambia:
The Lebanon The Gambia
- 10 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
- 11 *Most* and *the most*
Most without an article means 'the greater part'.
I live in London most of the time.
This is the most expensive hotel in town.

12 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 a area of time already mentioned.

On the Saturday of that week ...

Indefinite article

1 Jobs

Compare: *Tony is a builder. Tony was the builder of that house.*

2 In measuring

Three times a week. Fifty kilometres an hour.

£3.50 a kilo. £15 000 a year.

Formally, *per* can replace *a/an*.

3 Unknown people

Use of *a/an* emphasises that a person is unknown.

A Mr Jones called while you were out.

Zero article

1 Names

Compare:

Matthew Smith is one of my favourite artists. (a person)

A Matthew Smith hangs in their bedroom. (a painting)

2 Some unique organisations do not use *the*.

Parliament, but The (House of) Commons

3 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.

Activities

The activities include revision material.

1

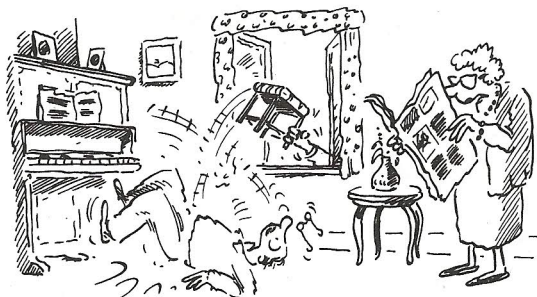
In each space put *a/an* or *the*, or leave the space blank.

It has been announced that for (1) the third consecutive month there has been (2) rise in (3) number of (4) 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 business 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

Correct the errors in these sentences.

- 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.
- On this record twins play piano duet.
- The halfway through meal we realised what waiter had said.
- If the Mrs Hillier phones, say I'm away on trip.
- There is a wonderful scenery in eastern part of Turkey.
- Cocker spaniel is one of most popular pet dogs.
- There is going to be fog and a cold weather all the next week.



- The burglaries are definitely on increase.
- I spent very interesting holiday at the Lake Coniston in England.
- We are against war in general, so of course we are against war like this between superpower and developing country.

3

Choose the most suitable word underlined. A dash (-) means that no article is needed.

- Helen doesn't like the/- cream cakes sold in a/the local bakery.
- The/- basketball is fast becoming a/the popular sport worldwide.
- We could see that the/- Alps were covered in the/- snow.
- It's a/- long time since I met a/- lovely person like you!
- 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.

4

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

- a) I'm going to stand for Parliament at 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 from 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 drink at Robin Hood.
- i) Nile flows right though 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) Go down Kingston Street and turn right into Mill Road.
- b) Please let me carry shopping. It's least I can do.
- c) I don't like milk in coffee.



- d) She was first woman to cross Atlantic in canoe.
- e) Jim became furniture salesman after leaving school.
- f) At end of busy day, sleep is best tonic.
- g) James Joyce I knew wasn't novelist and wasn't Irish either.
- h) We'll go for walk if sun comes out.
- i) This is last time I do you favour for while.
- j) I'm staying in Hilton so you can leave me message.

6

Correct the errors in these sentences.

- a) The time you spend on the relaxing pastime is good for you.
The time you spend on a relaxing pastime is good for you.
- b) Don't you work in record shop in High Street?
- c) A new campaign against the smoking is directed at the young women.
- d) The leader of the team is usually called captain.

- e) A half the time I get phone call it's wrong number.
- f) I saw brilliant rock band perform at the Isle of Wight rock festival.
- g) Do you know what the difference there is between the stoat and the weasel?
- h) At the half-time the both teams seemed in a difficulty.
- i) The earthquake could easily damage the Channel Tunnel.
- j) A painting I like best is the one not for a sale.

7

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

- a) Please watch the cabin attendant as she demonstrates use 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 of city.
- 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 for night.

8

Choose the most suitable word underlined. A dash (-) means that no article is needed.

- a) Brenda is the/- ideal for a/the job. She has a/- wealth of the/- experience.
Brenda is ideal for the job. She has a wealth of 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.
.....