

The Indefinite Article 'A'/'An' - One/Ones

'A'/'An'

We use *a/an*:

- ◆ with singular countable nouns when we talk about them in general.  
e.g. I want to buy **a** dress. (any dress)
- ◆ with the verbs **to be** and **have (got)**.  
e.g. Mary **has (got) a** dog. It's a German Shepherd.
- ◆ before **Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms** when we refer to an unknown person.  
e.g. **A Mrs Jones** called you this morning. (A person that we don't know.)
- ◆ to show: **a) price in relation to weight** (two pounds a kilo), **b) distance in relation to speed** (80km an hour) and **c) frequency** (twice a week).

We do not use *a/an*:

- ◆ with uncountable nouns or plural countable nouns. We use **some** instead of *a/an*.  
e.g. We need **some** milk and **some** flour.  
They bought **some** flowers.
- ◆ before an adjective if it is not followed by a noun.  
e.g. This ring is **expensive**.  
**But:** This is **an expensive** ring.

A(n)/One

- ◆ We use **a/an** to refer to an unspecified thing with the meaning 'any one'. We use **one** when we are counting, to put emphasis on number.  
e.g. He bought **a** tie. (We are not talking about a specific tie.)  
e.g. He bought **one** tie. (He didn't buy two ties.)
- ◆ We use **one** with the words **day, week, month, year, winter, morning, night, etc.** or with a specific day or month to say when something happened, usually in

narration.

e.g. **One** summer, the family decided to go to Tahiti.  
**One** Tuesday, Kate was walking home from work.

We can use **one day** to refer to the future.

e.g. **One day**, you will regret this.

- ◆ We use **one** or **one of ...** when we mean one person/thing out of many. It usually contrasts with **another/other(s)**.

e.g. **One** bus was full, but **the others** were empty.  
**One of** my colleagues is from Italy.

- ◆ We use **a/an** or **one** with no difference in meaning when counting or measuring distance, weight, time, etc.

e.g. I paid **a/one** hundred pounds for this bracelet.  
We bought **a/one** carton of milk.

They spent **a/one** month cruising down the Nile.

One/Ones

- ◆ We use **one** in the singular and **ones** in the plural to avoid repeating the noun when it is clear what we mean.

e.g. My house is the **one** with the red front door.

- ◆ We use **a/an** with **one** when there is an adjective before **one**.

e.g. I want to buy a jacket. I want **a leather one**.

**BUT:** I want to buy a jacket. I want **one** with a fur collar.

- ◆ We use **one/ones** with **this/that**.

e.g. I don't like **this** pair of shoes, but I like **that one**.

- ◆ We use **which one(s)** in questions.

e.g. I like the yellow blouse best. **Which one** do you like?

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Fill in *a, an, one* or *ones*.

- 1 I'm making ...*a*... sandwich. Would you like .....
- 2 There was only ..... sandwich left. All the others had been eaten.
- 3 We saw ..... giraffe and ..... alligator at the zoo.
- 4 These biscuits are nicer than the ..... I normally buy.
- 5 She paid ..... thousand pounds for her car.
- 6 ..... day, I will buy a house of my own.
- 7 I'd love ..... car like that ..... over there.

- 8 ..... of my brothers is ..... policeman.
- 9 I'm looking for ..... dress. I'd like a blue .....
- 10 I heard ..... amusing joke yesterday.
- 11 I like these three pairs of trousers. Which ..... do you like best?
- 12 Simon enjoys swimming. He goes to his local pool three times ..... week.
- 13 I'm tired. I need ..... rest.
- 14 ..... Mr Green came to see you. He's waiting in your office.
- 15 We had ..... exciting holiday. It was better than the ..... we had last year.

The Definite Article *The*We use *the*:

- ◆ with nouns when we are talking about something specific, that is, when the noun is mentioned for a second time or is already known. In other words, when we can answer the question 'Who?' or 'Which?'  
e.g. *I bought a shirt and a dress. **The** dress is blue and **the** shirt is green.*
- ◆ with nouns which are unique.  
e.g. ***the** sun, **the** Eiffel Tower*
- ◆ with the names of cinemas (***the** Rex*), hotels (***the** Carlton*), theatres (***the** Globe*), museums (***the** British Museum*), newspapers/magazines (***the** Times* but: *Time magazine*), ships (***the** Mary Rose*), organisations (***the** EU*), galleries (***the** Tate Gallery*)
- ◆ with the names of rivers (***the** Nile*), seas (***the** Caspian Sea*), groups of islands (***the** Canary Islands*), mountain ranges (***the** Alps*), deserts (***the** Sahara Desert*), oceans (***the** Atlantic*), canals (***the** Panama Canal*), countries when they include words such as *state, Kingdom, republic, etc.* (***the** United Kingdom*) and names or nouns with 'of' (***the** Leaning Tower of Pisa*)  
**NOTE:** ***the** equator, **the** North/South Pole, **the** north of England, **the** south/west/north/east*
- ◆ with the names of musical instruments and dances.  
e.g. ***the** piano, **the** tango*
- ◆ with the names of families (***the** Windsors*), and nationalities ending in -sh, -ch or -ese (***the** French, **the** Scottish, **the** Japanese, etc.*). Other plural nationalities are used with or without *the* (***the** Americans, **the** Greeks, etc.*)
- ◆ with titles (***the** King, **the** Prince of Wales, **the** President*)  
**BUT:** 'The' is omitted before titles with proper names. *Queen Victoria*
- ◆ with adjectives/adverbs in the superlative form.  
e.g. *He's **the** most respected man in the firm.*  
**BUT:** When 'most' is followed by a noun, it does not take 'the'.  
e.g. ***Most** children like cartoons.*
- ◆ with the words *morning, afternoon, evening* and *night*.  
e.g. *We eat dinner in **the** evening. **but:** at night, at noon, at midnight, by day/night, at 4 o'clock, etc.*
- ◆ with historical periods/events. ***the** Middle Ages, **the** Crimean War* (**but:** *World War II*)
- ◆ with the words *only, last, first* (used as adjectives).  
e.g. *He was **the** first person to arrive.*

We do not use *the*:

- ◆ with uncountable and plural countable nouns when talking about something in general, that is, when we cannot answer the question 'Who?' or 'Which?'  
e.g. ***Fish** live in water.*
- ◆ with proper nouns. e.g. ***Mark** lives in **Brighton**.*
- ◆ with the names of sports, games, activities, days, months, celebrations, colours, drinks, meals and languages (when they are not followed by the word 'language'). e.g. *I often play **chess**. We speak **German**.*  
**but:** ***The German language** is difficult to learn.*
- ◆ with the names of countries (*Italy, **but:** **the** Netherlands, **the** Lebanon, **the** Sudan, **the** Vatican City*), cities (*Paris*), streets (*Oxford Street, **but:** **the** High Street, **the** Strand, **the** Mall, **the** London road, **the** A19, **the** M6 motorway*), squares (*Trafalgar Square*), bridges (*Tower Bridge **but:** **the** Bridge of Sighs, **the** Humber Bridge*), parks (*Hyde Park*), railway stations (*Victoria Station*), mountains (*Ben Nevis*), individual islands (*Tahiti*), lakes (*Lake Geneva*), continents (*Africa*)
- ◆ with *possessive adjectives* or the *possessive case*.  
e.g. *That is **my** car.*
- ◆ with two-word names when the first word is the name of a person or place *Gatwick Airport, Windsor Castle **BUT:** **the** White House* (because 'White' is not the name of a person or place)
- ◆ with names of pubs, restaurants, shops, banks and hotels named after the people who started them and end in -s or -'s. (*Lloyds Bank, Harrods, Dave's Pub **but:** **the** Red Lion (pub)* (because 'Red' is not the name of a person or place)
- ◆ with the words *bed, church, college, court, hospital, prison, school, university* when we refer to the purpose for which they exist.  
e.g. *Sarah went to **school**. (She is a student.)*  
**BUT:** *Her father went to **the** school to see her teacher yesterday. (He went to the school as a visitor.)*
- ◆ with the word *work* (= place of work).  
e.g. *He is at **work**.*
- ◆ with the words *home, Father/Mother* when we talk about our own home/parents. e.g. ***Father** is at **home**.*
- ◆ with *by + means of transport: by bus/car/train/plane, etc.* e.g. *She travelled **by** bus.*  
**BUT:** *She left **on the** 8 o'clock bus this morning.*
- ◆ with the names of illnesses. e.g. *He's got **malaria**.*  
**but:** ***flu/the** flu, **measles/the** measles, **mumps/the** mumps*

### NOTE:

- ◆ We use *the* with the words *beach, station, cinema, theatre, coast, country(side), ground, jungle, seaside, weather, world, shop, library, city, sea* (**BUT to be at sea = to be sailing**), etc.  
e.g. Let's go to **the beach**.  
We spent the weekend in **the countryside**.  
**The weather** is awful today.
- ◆ We usually don't use *the* with the word *television*.  
e.g. I like watching **television** in the evenings.  
**BUT: Turn on the television, please.** (the television set)
- ◆ *The* is optional with seasons.  
e.g. My favourite season is **(the) spring**.
- ◆ We use *the* + adjective to refer to a group of people usually with the adjectives: *poor, rich, sick, injured, elderly, unemployed, homeless, disabled, young, old, dead, blind, deaf, handicapped, mentally ill*.  
e.g. **The young** are usually impatient.
- ◆ When we refer to a group of people, animals or things we use:
  - 1 *a/an* or *the* with singular countable nouns.  
e.g. **A/The dolphin** is a clever creature.
  - 2 plural countable nouns without *a/an* or *the*.  
e.g. **Dolphins** are clever creatures.  
(NOT: ~~The dolphins are clever creatures.~~)

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**Fill in the gaps with one of the words from the list adding 'the' where necessary. Use each word twice.**

*prison, school, bed, sea, hospital*

- 1 The minute we reached the beach, the children ran into **...the sea...** to swim.
- 2 My brother is in the navy. He is at ..... for months sometimes.
- 3 I usually go to ..... at about 11 pm to get a good night's sleep.
- 4 The cat is sitting on .....
- 5 The Prime Minister visited ..... yesterday and talked to the prisoners.
- 6 The men who robbed the bank are in ..... now.
- 7 The ambulance took the injured people to .....
- 8 I must go to ..... to visit my aunt. She's had an operation.
- 9 We saw the children in their classrooms as we walked past .....
- 10 I want to go to university when I leave .....

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**Choose the correct alternative.**

- 1 Catherine loves **cats/the cats**.
- 2 Look at **cats/the cats!** They are chasing a bird.
- 3 I don't like **coffee/the coffee**, but I like **tea/the tea**.
- 4 You cut **the cake/cake** and I'll pour **coffee/the coffee**.
- 5 **Life/The life** will be very different in the future.
- 6 **Life/The life** of a mayfly is extremely short.
- 7 I enjoy **swimming/the swimming** in the sea.
- 8 **Children/The children** usually like playing games.
- 9 **Children/The children** have gone to the park.
- 10 All **people/the people** in this room are my relatives.
- 11 All **people/the people** should have freedom of speech.
- 12 **Villages/The villages** in this part of the country are very beautiful.
- 13 **Breakfast/The breakfast** is the most important meal of **day/the day**.
- 14 Paul was **only/the only** person who remembered me.
- 15 In **Stone Age/the Stone Age**, people lived in caves.
- 16 I would like to travel to **Spain/the Spain**.
- 17 We travelled to London by **train/the train**.
- 18 He is learning to play **flute/the flute**.

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**Fill in a, an or the where necessary.**

- 1 A: Shall we go to **...the...** cinema tonight?  
B: Yes. It's a long time since I saw ..... film.
- 2 A: Have you ever been to ..... Copenhagen?  
B: Yes. I think it's ..... prettiest city in Europe.
- 3 A: Did you see all ..... sights in Paris?  
B: Yes, but ..... Eiffel Tower and ..... Louvre were my favourites.
- 4 A: What did you have for ..... lunch today?  
B: I had ..... sandwich in ..... office canteen.
- 5 A: Do you buy ..... newspaper every day?  
B: Yes. I usually buy ..... Independent and my wife reads ..... Times.
- 6 A: Danny plays ..... golf very well, doesn't he?  
B: Yes, he practises every weekend with his friends.
- 7 A: Which station are you meeting John at?  
B: ..... Waterloo Station. It's ..... big place. I hope I find him easily.
- 8 A: Are you going on holiday this summer?  
B: Yes. We've booked ..... holiday for three weeks in ..... Canary Islands.
- 9 A: What did you see on your tour today?  
B: ..... Buckingham Palace and ..... Houses of Parliament.
- 10 A: ..... Duponts, who live next door to us, are French.  
B: ..... French are very friendly people, aren't they?
- 11 A: That's ..... beautiful dress. Where did you get it?  
B: In ..... summer sale at ..... Harrods, actually.
- 12 A: Who is going to open ..... new shopping centre?  
B: I heard that ..... Queen is going to do it.

Nouns - Articles - Word Formation

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Fill in *a, an* or *the* where necessary.



A 1) ...*The*.. football team who have won 2) ..... World Cup 3) ..... most times is 4) ..... Brazil. They have won 5) ..... competition four times. 6) ..... team also hold 7) ..... record for 8) ..... greatest number of 9) ..... goals scored overall and have played in every one of 10) ..... tournament's finals.

B 1) ..... tallest man in 2) ..... world was born in 3) ..... USA in 1918. His name was 4) ..... Robert Wadlow and 5) ..... last time he was measured, in 1940, he had reached a height of 2.72 m. His hands were 32.4 cm from 6) ..... wrist to 7) ..... tip of 8) ..... middle finger.

C 1) ..... David was waiting at 2) ..... King's Cross station. He was about to travel to 3) ..... Newcastle by 4) ..... train for 5) ..... job interview. However, 6) ..... train was late and he had been standing on 7) ..... platform for over 8) ..... hour.

D I take 1) ..... bus to 2) ..... school every day. I leave 3) ..... house at eight o'clock in 4) ..... morning. It is 5) ..... five-minute walk from my house to 6) ..... bus-stop. 7) ..... journey to school takes about 8) ..... quarter of 9) ..... hour.

E 1) ..... Queen is going to visit 2) ..... Bridgeford next week to open 3) ..... new hospital which has been built in 4) ..... town. It will be 5) ..... exciting event which all 6) ..... local people will attend.

F 1) ..... Stuart has got 2) ..... cold, so he has to stay in 3) ..... bed. His mother has made him 4) ..... bowl of soup and he has got 5) ..... box of 6) ..... tissues on his 7) ..... bedside table. He will probably spend most of 8) ..... day sleeping.

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Read the following proverbs and fill in *a, an, the* or *-*.

- 1) *-* .. Rome wasn't built in ..... day.
- 2) ..... actions speak louder than ..... words.
- 3) ..... apple ..... day keeps ..... doctor away.

- 4) When in ..... Rome, do as ..... Romans do.
- 5) Where there's ..... will there's ..... way.
- 6) You can't teach ..... old dog ..... new tricks.
- 7) You can't get ..... blood out of ..... stone.
- 8) You cannot make ..... omelette without breaking ..... eggs.
- 9) ..... more you get, ..... more you want.
- 10) ..... more ..... merrier.
- 11) ..... home is where ..... heart is.
- 12) Fire is ..... good servant but ..... bad master.

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Choose the correct alternative.

- 1) *Historian/A historian* is a person who studies *history/the history*.
- 2) *Panda/The panda* is a large mammal which lives in *China/the China*. *Pandas/The pandas* have black and white fur and eat *bamboo/the bamboo* shoots.
- 3) We visited *wildlife park/a wildlife park* last week. It was *interesting experience/an interesting experience*.
- 4) Sally's going to buy *the new car/a new car* next month. She wants one which runs on *lead-free petrol/the lead-free petrol*.
- 5) We stayed at *hotel/a hotel* by *the sea/sea*. *Room/The room* was very comfortable and *a view/the view* was fantastic.
- 6) Simon was *last/the last* person to arrive at *party/the party*. He had been waiting for *the taxi/a taxi* for an hour.
- 7) Susan doesn't believe in *ghosts/the ghosts*. She thinks that *the supernatural/a supernatural* is *a product/product* of *people's/the people's* imagination.
- 8) *Clothes/The clothes* I bought yesterday were very cheap. There was *sale/a sale* in one of *department stores/the department stores* in *a city centre/the city centre*.

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Fill in the gaps with *a, an, the, or -*.

- 1) A: Have you got ... *a*.. car?  
B: Yes. I bought ..... second-hand one last winter.
- 2) A: How often do you take ..... holiday?  
B: I go to my house in ..... country about twice ..... year.
- 3) A: I can't find ..... shoes I wanted to wear for my party.  
B: Have you looked in ..... cupboard in ..... hall?
- 4) A: Did you have fun at ..... theatre last night?  
B: Yes, it was ..... enjoyable evening and ..... play was great.
- 5) A: That's ..... interesting painting.  
B: I know. I found it in ..... attic.
- 6) A: Did you stay in ..... hotel when you went to ..... London?  
B: Yes. We had ..... beautiful room in ..... King hotel.