

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*