

# WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW ABOUT ARTICLES?

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## THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE *A/AN*

The indefinite article **a/an** is used before singular countable nouns.

A cat/ an elephant

We use a/an:

- ✓ With singular countable nouns when we want to say what somebody/something is or what someone's job is.  
It is a book.  
He is a pilot.

We don't use a/an:

- ✓ With uncountable or plural nouns. We can use *some* instead:  
Some chocolate  
Some eggs

## THE DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

The definite article **the** is used with singular or plural nouns: the man, the books, etc

### ***We use THE:***

- ✓ With nouns when we are talking about something specific, for example when the noun is mentioned for a second time or is already known. In other words, we can answer the question Who? Or Which?  
I can see a dress. The dress is green. (Which dress? The specific dress which we can see in the picture)
- ✓ With nouns which are unique  
The Earth, the Sun, the sky, the Taj Mahal
- ✓ Before the names of rivers, seas/oceans, mountain ranges, deserts and groups of islands/states.  
The Nile, the Black Sea, the Atlantic, the Alps, the Sahara, the Bahamas, the USA
- ✓ Before the names of musical instruments  
The piano, the guitar
- ✓ Before nationalities and names of families  
The Chinese, the Italians, the Browns
- ✓ With the words: morning, afternoon, evening  
I go to school in the morning.
- ✓ With titles when the name of the person is not mentioned: The Duchess of Kent, the Queen, But: Queen Mary
- ✓ We use the+adjective (without a noun) to refer to a group of people usually with these adjectives: poor, rich, injured, elderly, unemployed, homeless, etc. We should respect the elderly.
- ✓ With adjectives/adverbs in the superlative form  
She is the most beautiful girl I've ever met.  
Bob drives the most carefully of all.
- ✓ With the names of hotels (the Sheraton Hotel), theatres/cinemas (the Odeon Theatre), ships (the Queen Mary), organizations (the UN), newspapers (the Times) and museums (the Louvre)
- ✓ With historical periods/events

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The Stone Age, the First World War

### *We don't use THE:*

- ✓ With plural nouns when we talk about them in general  
Lions are wild animals. (Which lions? All lions in general)
- ✓ Before proper nouns  
This is Mary.
- ✓ With the names of countries (Romania), cities (Rome), streets (Oxford Street), parks (Hyde Park), mountains (Mont Blanc), railway stations (Victoria Station), bridges (Tower Bridge), individual islands (Rhodes), lakes (Lake Ontario) and continents (Europe)
- ✓ With the names of sports, games, activities, days, months, celebrations, meals and languages (when they are followed by the word language: I speak French. But: The French language is spoken in some parts of Canada.
- ✓ With the word mother/father when we talk about our own parents. Father is at home.
- ✓ With titles when the person's name is mentioned: Prince Charles, President Regan
- ✓ With means of transport: by bus/car/plane
- ✓ With the names of illnesses: He's got malaria.  
But: flu/the flu, measles/the measles, mumps/the mumps
- ✓ With the words: school, church, hospital, college, university, court, prison when we refer to the purpose for which they exist:  
Ben was in prison. (He was a prisoner.)  
Ben's mother went to the prison to see him. (She went to the prison as a visitor.)