● Articles / countable and uncountable nouns / quantifiers

Indefinite article

There are two indefinite articles in English: 'a' and 'an'. 'An' is used before vowel sounds.

Use	Example
Singular countable nouns (when we are not being specific or when we mention something for the first time)	*There's **a** good film on TV tonight.*

Watch out!

- Whether we use 'an' or 'a' depends on the sound, **not** the spelling.
  - ✓ *The news is on TV in **an** hour.*
  - ✗ ~~*The news is on TV in **a** hour.*~~
  - ✓ *Being in a film was **a** unique experience for me.*
  - ✗ ~~*Being in a film was **an** unique experience for me.*~~

Definite article

There is one definite article in English: 'the'.

Use	Example
Singular countable nouns (when we are being specific)	*Where's **the** DVD you were talking about?*
Singular countable nouns (when we are talking generally)	***The** radio seemed amazing to people at first.*
Plural countable nouns (when we are being specific)	*I didn't believe **the** rumours about the prime minister.*
Uncountable nouns (when we are being specific)	*I followed **the** advice my lawyer gave me.*

Watch out!

- The way we say 'the' changes depending on the sound at the start of the next word.
  Before a consonant sound (*the media, the USA, the programme*), we pronounce it /ðə/.
  Before a vowel sound (*the announcer, the actor, the editor*), we pronounce it /ðɪ/.
- We often use 'the' when we are talking about something there is only one of.
  - ✓ ***the** sky, **the** sun, **the** moon, **the** Prince of Wales, **the** North Pole, **the** World Cup*

Zero article

We often don't use an article at all. This is sometimes called the zero article.

Use	Example
Plural countable nouns (when we are talking generally)	*Journalists often face dangerous situations.*
Uncountable nouns (when we are talking generally)	*News travels fast these days.*

Articles in phrases and expressions

Notice how we use articles in the following phrases and expressions. Many of these are examples of general categories. For example, '***the** River Thames*' means that we use 'the' for all rivers.

Use	Example
Time	definite article: *in **the** 1990s, in (**the**) summer, in **the** morning* zero article: *in 2008, in June, on Friday, at night*
People and work	indefinite article: *have **a** job, work as **a** ...* definite article: ***the** queen, **the** principal, **the** president, **the** French* zero article: *become president, go to work, be at work, have work to do, he's French.*
Places	definite article: ***the** Alps, **the** Atlantic Ocean, **the** River Thames, **the** Earth, **the** Arctic, **the** USA, **the** UK, **the** Cyclades* zero article: *Mount Everest, Paris, America, Mars/Venus/Jupiter etc, Oxford Street, Lake Superior, Crete*
Entertainment and sport	definite article: ***the** media, on **the** radio, play **the** guitar, go to **the** cinema, watch (**the**) TV* zero article: *listen to music, on television, play tennis/football etc*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Use	Example
Organisations	definite article: ***the*** *army,* ***the*** *police,* ***the*** *fire brigade*
Education	definite article: *go to* ***the*** *school (as a visitor), be in* ***the*** *first year* zero article: *go to school (as a student), be in Class 3B, maths*
Travel	indefinite article: *take* ***a*** *taxi, catch* ***a/the*** *bus* definite article: *on* ***the*** *bus* zero article: *on foot, go home, go by bus*
Health	indefinite article: *have* ***a*** *cold/headache/cough* definite article: *have (****the****) flu/measles* zero article: *have toothache*
Public buildings	definite article: ***the*** *bank,* ***the*** *tax office, go to* ***the*** *hospital/prison (as a visitor)* zero article: *go to hospital/prison/church (as a patient/prisoner/worshipper)*

US vs UK Grammar

- Speakers of American English do not usually use *hospital* without an article.
  US: *The ambulance took Simon to* ***the*** *hospital.*
  UK: *The ambulance took Simon to hospital.*

Countable and uncountable nouns

Type	Example
Countable nouns ● Use *a, the, some, many* ● Use a singular or plural verb	*I want to be* ***a journalist****.* *Where is* ***the newspaper****?* *There are* ***some*** *good* ***articles*** *in the paper.* *How* ***many channels*** *do you get?*
Uncountable nouns ● Use *the, some, much* ● Use a singular verb	*Did you hear* ***the news****?* ***Some*** *important* ***news*** *has just come in.* *How* ***much information*** *do we have about it?* *Your* ***advice was*** *very useful.*
Common uncountable nouns: *advice, coffee, furniture, glass, hair, homework, information, knowledge, luggage, money, news, paper, work*	

Watch out!

- Most uncountable nouns are singular, but a few are plural. These include *clothes, scissors, jeans, spectacles, trousers, groceries,* etc. With these words, we use a plural verb.
  ✓ *Oh, no! My new clothes* ***are*** *dirty!*
- Some nouns are countable with one meaning and uncountable with another meaning.
  ✓ *Do you think you could bring me* ***a*** *clean* ***glass****?* (countable)
  ✓ *We should make computer monitors out of recycled* ***glass****.* (uncountable)

Quantifiers

Quantifier	Use	Example
many	● countable nouns, usually in negative statements and questions	*There aren't* ***many*** *programmes on TV that I find interesting.*
much	● uncountable nouns, usually in negative statements and questions	*My dad never shows* ***much*** *interest in the news.*
a lot of / lots of	● countable and uncountable nouns in positive statements	*That film has won* ***a lot of / lots of*** *awards.* *What* ***a lot of*** *luggage you've got!*
a few	● countable nouns, means 'some'	*There have been* ***a few*** *scandals in the papers recently.*
a little	● uncountable nouns, means 'some'	*They say that* ***a little*** *knowledge is a dangerous thing.*
few	● countable nouns, means 'not many'	*Richard has* ***few*** *interests outside work.*
little	● uncountable nouns, means 'not much'	*The police have* ***little*** *information about the robbery.*

Watch out!

- The phrase 'only a few' means 'not many'. The phrase 'only a little' means 'not much'.
  ✓ *There are* ***only a few*** *programmes on TV that I like watching.*
  ✓ *There's* ***only a little*** *sugar left, so get some when you go out.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A Circle the correct word or phrase.

1 I love this time in **evening / the evening** when the sun is going down.
2 People play **cricket / the cricket** in South Africa, Australia and Sri Lanka.
3 It's too far to walk so I think I'll catch **bus / the bus**.
4 Jane had to go home from school because she had **a headache / the headache**.
5 The robber was sent to **prison / the prison** for a total of three years.
6 My cousin works as **waiter / a waiter** in a cafe near where we live.
7 The underground doesn't run this late so we'll have to take **a taxi / the taxi**.
8 I like to listen to **music / the music** in my free time.
9 My favourite subject at school is **chemistry / the chemistry**.
10 Jazz music appeared in America **in 1920s / in the 1920s**.

B Choose the correct answer. If no word is needed, choose 'D'.

1 Oh, I didn't tell you! We've got ..... new English teacher.
A a B an C the D *no word*

2 Here's ..... DVD you asked to borrow.
A a B an C the D *no word*

3 We're out of ..... coffee, so could you get some from the supermarket?
A a B an C the D *no word*

4 The prize is ..... unique opportunity to travel the world!
A a B an C the D *no word*

5 It looks like ..... glass in your bedroom window is cracked.
A a B an C the D *no word*

6 It's ..... honour to be here this evening to speak to you.
A a B an C the D *no word*

7 There's ..... good chance we'll be late for the meeting.
A a B an C the D *no word*

8 Reports are coming in of a major oil spill in ..... Mediterranean.
A a B an C the D *no word*

9 I went to see the doctor because I'm finding it difficult to sleep at ..... night.
A a B an C the D *no word*

10 Do you think that they'll ever send a manned mission to ..... Venus?
A a B an C the D *no word*

C Circle the extra word in each line.

Being in the news

1 The many people who appear in the news for the first time
2 find that a sudden fame has a negative effect on their lives.
3 The national press can be an unforgiving and the loss of
4 the privacy that comes with fame is an extra problem at a
5 difficult time. This is especially the case when a someone is
6 in the news because of a tragedy or the serious crime. Just
7 at the moment when you are under a most stress, you find
8 microphones and the cameras in your face. The media have
9 a responsibility to inform the public, but an innocent people
10 are often hurt by the demand for the scandal.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

D Complete using the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1 The clothes you bought me for my birthday ..... (**be**) wonderful!
2 It turned out that the information we had received ..... (**be**) wrong.
3 My new jeans ..... (**be**) in the wash and I wanted to wear them tonight.
4 The luggage on a plane ..... (**take**) up a lot of room.
5 Your hair ..... (**look**) really nice and shiny.
6 I could tell by the look on her face that the news ..... (**not / be**) good.
7 Oh, no! My money ..... (**be**) in my other jacket!

E Find ten mistakes in this passage and correct them.

Newflash!

'We interrupt your usual schedule to bring you an important news. We are receiving informations about a spaceship that has landed outside the White House. The large ship seems to be made of glasses. Reports say that a short time ago aliens came out of the craft. Eye-witnesses described them as short and said their clothes was made of metal and their hairs was bright green. Strangely, one of them appeared to be wearing a jean. Much people said that they seemed to be friendly. The President of the United States is currently holding a meeting with the visitors in the hope that we can exchange knowledges. Police advice are to stay indoors and under no circumstances approach the spaceship. We will be back with another news as soon as we can. And now, back to your usual programme, *Gardening for Beginners*.'

F Complete each second sentence using the word given, so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence. Write between two and five words in each gap.

1 Not many people came to the party. **only**
There ..... people at the party.

2 The witness described the mugger to the police. **a**
The witness ..... of the mugger.

3 There isn't much sugar left. **a**
There ..... sugar left.

4 I am thinking of becoming a firefighter when I leave school. **brigade**
I am thinking of ..... when I leave school.

5 We were shocked by the news and didn't know what to do. **shocking**
The news ..... didn't know what to do.

6 There aren't many good films out at the moment. **only**
There ..... good films out at the moment.

7 I didn't eat much dessert because I'm on a diet. **only**
I ..... dessert because I'm on a diet.

8 You have lots of hats! **lot**
What ..... you have!

LIVEWORKSHEETS

G Match to make sentences.

1	I'm quite busy so I've got	A	a little time to talk to you now.
2	Happily, we have had	B	a few people recycle their rubbish.
3	My dad just got a good job so we have	C	a few complaints from hotel guests recently.
4	Pollution is improving now that	D	little money for luxuries.
5	My mum has lost her job so we have	E	few people recycle their rubbish.
6	My lesson's been cancelled so I've got	F	very few complaints from hotel guests recently.
7	It's a shame that	G	a little money for luxuries.
8	Unfortunately, we have had	H	very little time to talk to you now.

H Choose the correct answer.

1 If you have ..... time at the end of the exam, check your answers.
A few B a few C little D a little

2 Give me ..... minutes and I'll be ready.
A few B a few C little D a little

3 We've only got ..... milk left so get some when you go shopping.
A few B a few C little D a little

4 Just ..... practice every day and you'll soon be able to play the piano.
A few B a few C little D a little

5 We were disappointed that ..... of the members came to the youth club party.
A few B a few C little D a little

6 Sprinkle ..... sugar on the strawberries.
A few B a few C little D a little

7 I suppose now I'm 43, I have ..... hope of playing football for England.
A few B a few C little D a little

8 Could you help me with ..... exercises I don't understand?
A few B a few C little D a little

9 There's ..... coffee left, if anyone wants some.
A few B a few C little D a little

10 Becoming an astronaut is so demanding that ..... people manage it.
A few B a few C little D a little

11 I'll meet you in half an hour - I've got ..... e-mails to write first.
A few B a few C little D a little

12 Many people feel there's ..... point in voting, even in a general election.
A few B a few C little D a little

LIVEWORKSHEETS

I Write an article in each gap where necessary. If an article is not necessary, write a dash (–).

Ray: Hello?
Sandy: Hi. Is that Ray? It's (**1**) ..... Sandy.
Ray: Oh, hi! How was (**2**) ..... film?
Sandy: Great! We took (**3**) ..... taxi to (**4**) ..... cinema and (**5**) ..... taxi driver got lost, so we almost missed (**6**) ..... start. What about you? What did you do (**7**) ..... last night?
Ray: Oh, I just stayed at (**8**) ..... home. I listened to (**9**) ..... music for a while and then watched (**10**) ..... news.
Sandy: Oh, yes? So what's happening in (**11**) ..... world? Anything I should know about?
Ray: Well, I know you don't like (**12**) ..... politics, but there was (**13**) ..... interesting report on (**14**) ..... Asia. It gave me (**15**) ..... few ideas for (**16**) ..... geography essay we were talking about (**17**) ..... other day.
Sandy: Ah, right. Anything else?
Ray: Nothing important. Just that (**18**) ..... lead singer of your favourite band is getting married – to (**19**) ..... actress, (**20**) ..... one who was in that film ...
Sandy: What?! Why didn't you tell me? I have to check this out on (**21**) ..... Internet! See you at (**22**) ..... school tomorrow. Bye!
Ray: Okay. Bye.

J Rewrite the sentences correctly, adding articles where necessary.

1 We went to theatre last night and saw great play, although some of acting was bit poor.
.....
2 Give me ring tomorrow before I go to work and we'll arrange to meet at office.
.....
3 Prime minister told reporter that government wanted to pass law banning hunting.
.....
4 I asked hotel manager where pool was and she directed me to seventh floor.
.....
5 They said on news on radio that Mount Vesuvius, volcano that destroyed Pompeii, could erupt again.
.....
6 Car has revolutionised transport and is absolutely vital to economy of most countries.
.....
7 Judge read jury's verdict aloud and then sentenced accused to five years in prison.
.....
8 Job in media can be quite stressful because of pressure you are under to do things on time.
.....
9 Very few people in 19th century went to school or university and most started work at very young age.
.....
10 I have little free time since I gave up karate, so I'm thinking of trying new hobby, like learning musical instrument.
.....

LIVEWORKSHEETS