

49 Articles (1): a, an or the

Articles, nouns, pronouns, etc.

1 Compare a and an:

We use **a** before words which begin with consonants (b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l ...):

a doctor a big car a girl

We also use **a** before **u** when it sounds like the word 'you'; and before **eu**:

university (sound: 'you'): **a university**

a European city

We use **an** before words which begin with vowels (a, e, i, o, u):

an apple an interesting film

We also use **an** before words that begin with a silent **h**. Compare **hour** and **house**:

hour (sound: 'our'): **an hour**

house: **a house**

2 Compare a/an and the:

Mary: *I bought **a** CD player and **a** TV yesterday.* ~ Joe: *Was **the** CD player expensive?*

We usually use **a/an** with a noun to talk about a person or thing for the first time:

a CD player

We use **the** when we talk about the person or thing again:

the CD player (= the one that Mary bought)

3 There are some special uses of a/an and the:

- ▶ We use **a/an** with prices, frequency and speeds:

*It costs £2 **a** litre.*

*I drink about three cups of coffee **a** day.*

*You're driving at ninety miles **an** hour!*

- ▶ We use **a/an** before **hundred, thousand, million**:

a hundred people a thousand days

- ▶ We use **a/an** for talking about jobs:

*I'm **a** bank manager.*

- ▶ We use **the** when there is only one of something:

*May I turn on **the** TV? (There is only one TV in the room.)*

*Where's Mary? ~ She's in **the** kitchen.*

(There is only one kitchen in the house.)

- ▶ We use **the** with musical instruments:

*I play **the** guitar. Jane plays **the** violin.*

Practice

A Put a or an in the gaps.

- ▶ I bought a new car yesterday.
- ▶ It's an old film.
- 1 She's reading interesting book.
- 2 They've got house in Spain.
- 3 It's cheap restaurant.
- 4 He's Italian businessman.
- 5 The journey took hour.
- 6 We've lost black cat.
- 7 I want to buy umbrella.
- 8 It was difficult exam.

B Now finish the sentences using a or an and the correct phrase from the box.

European country	Indian river	American director	university town
Japanese city	English airport	German car	

- ▶ Steven Spielberg is an American director.
- 1 Tokyo is
- 2 Heathrow is
- 3 The Ganges is

- 4 Oxford is
 5 A Mercedes is
 6 Spain is

C Ian Brent wants to take out an insurance policy. An agent from the insurance company, Mr Cox, is asking him questions. Put *a*, *an* or *the* in the gaps in these conversations.

Mr Cox: Hello, my name is Mike Cox. I am from (1) *an* insurance company.
 I have (2) *a* form with some questions. Your name is Ian Brent.
 Do you have (3) middle name?

Mr Brent: Yes, my full name is Ian Stanley Brent.

Mr Cox: All right. Now, where do you live, Mr Brent?

Mr Brent: I live in (4) house in Peckham.

Mr Cox: Peckham, I see. And what is your job?

Mr Brent: I'm (5) scientist. I work for (6) government.

Mr Cox: Do you work in (7) laboratory or in (8) office?

Mr Brent: I work in (9) small office in (10) centre of London.

Mr Cox: And how do you get to (11) office from Peckham?

Mr Brent: I usually take (12) underground.

Mr Cox: What is your salary, Mr Brent?

Mr Brent: Well, I earn almost £35,000 (13) year.

Mr Cox: Now, your family. You're married, aren't you?

Mr Brent: Yes, and we have two children, (14) girl and (15) boy.
 (16) girl is sixteen and (17) boy is fourteen.

Mr Cox: Fine. And you want to take out (18) insurance policy for £100,000.
 Is that right?

Mr Brent: Yes, that's right.

Mr Cox: Well, that's all. Can you sign (19) form here at (20)
 bottom? Thank you.

D There are some mistakes in these sentences. Put a tick (✓) if you think the underlined word is correct. Cross it out and change it if you think it's wrong.

- ▶ I'm not sure what she does, but I think she's a ✓ doctor.
- ▶ I saw the a thousand different things when I was on holiday.
- 1 Be careful! That perfume costs £100 a bottle.
- 2 We must invite him to the party. He plays a piano and a guitar.
- 3 A: What does John do?
 B: I'm not sure, but I think he is the teacher in a school.
- 4 She likes to drive at the hundred miles an hour.
- 5 I play the violin in an orchestra. They pay me £80 the day!
- 6 I've got the hundred jobs to do before we leave.
- 7 A: Is my handbag in the living-room?
 B: No, it isn't. I saw it in a kitchen.

50 Articles (2): a/an, the or no article

- 1 We use **a/an** with singular nouns:
*He was reading **a** book.*
*I saw **an** interesting film yesterday.*

- 2 Look at this example:
*When I arrived, John was reading **a** book.*

We use **a/an** when it isn't necessary to make clear which particular thing we are talking about. There are lots of books; John was reading one of them.

We use **a/an** to talk about people's jobs:
*Jim is **an** engineer.* (= There are lots of engineers; Jim is one.)

We use **a/an** to describe things or people:
*They have **a** beautiful house.* (= There are lots of beautiful houses; they have one.)
*John is **an** old friend of mine.*

- 3 We use **the** with singular or plural nouns:
the book the books

We can use **the** with uncountable nouns (e.g. **music, water, food, education**):
The water is in the fridge.

Note:

- ▶ uncountable nouns do not have a plural (NOT ~~two musics~~, ~~three waters~~).
- ▶ we do not use **a/an** with uncountable nouns (NOT ~~a music~~, ~~a water~~). (See Unit 53.)

- 4 We use **the** when it is clear which person or thing we are talking about:

*Jean was reading **a** book. She closed **the** book.* (= She closed the book that she was reading.)

*Anna likes music, but she doesn't like **the** music that John plays.*

*Mike's gone to **the** shops.* (= the local shops)
*She's in **the** kitchen.* (= the kitchen in this house)

*I must go to **the** bank.* (= my bank, where I keep my money)

***the** centre/**the** station/**the** airport* (in a city)
***the** River Thames* (There is only one.)
***the** government in my country*

- 5 We do not use **the** before plural nouns (e.g. **vegetables**) or uncountable nouns (e.g. **education, music**) when we are talking about something in general:

*Do you like **vegetables**?* (= any vegetables)
*I think **education** is very important.*

- 6 We do not use **a** or **the** before names of languages, meal names, the names of cities, most countries and most streets, and the names of airports, stations, single mountains or lakes:

*She speaks **Spanish**.*

*She lives in **Amsterdam** in **Holland**.* (But we say **the** U.S.A., **the** United Kingdom.)

*What time will **lunch** be?*

*from **Heathrow Airport** to **Oxford Street***

Practice

- A Put **a, an** or **the** into the gaps if they are required. Leave the gaps empty if nothing is required.

- ▶ I want to put some money into my bank account, so I'm going to the bank this afternoon. It's in Midland Street.
- 1 I had sandwich for lunch today.
- 2 We flew to Dublin Airport in Ireland.
- 3 It was long flight, but eventually we arrived in U.S.A.
- 4 I'm trying to learn Japanese. I'm having lesson tomorrow.
- 5 He made angry speech against government.
- 6 She is famous actress and she is appearing in popular TV series.
- 7 They live in Paris in area near to River Seine.
- 8 They've bought small flat in Park Street.

B Complete the sentences by putting in *a*, *an* or *the* if required. Leave the gap empty if nothing is required. (Note that the following words in this exercise are uncountable nouns: *music*, *fuel*, *education*, *fish*, *food*, *coffee*, *exercise*.)

- She read *the*..... letters that had arrived that morning.
- 1 It was a nice day, so we had lunch in garden of my house.
 - 2 I'm just going to shops. I'll be back in a few minutes.
 - 3 We phoned for taxi to take us to airport.
 - 4 I like listening to music when I come home.
 - 5 Without fuel, cars don't work.
 - 6 John was at home. He was reading magazine in living-room.
 - 7 His parents believe that education is a very important thing.
 - 8 Jane doesn't like fish; she never eats it.
 - 9 After dinner, I washed plates and glasses.
 - 10 Did you like food at party yesterday?
 - 11 A: Where's coffee?
B: It's in cupboard next to sink.
 - 12 Doctors say that exercise is good for everybody.

C Complete this conversation by putting in *a*, *an* or *the* if required. Leave the gap empty if nothing is required.

- Mike: Is Maria (►) *a*..... student at your college?
- Rosie: No, she's (1)..... old friend of mine. We were at school together.
- Mike: What does she do now?
- Rosie: She's (2)..... computer programmer. She's not English, you know. She comes from (3)..... Brazil, but she's living in (4)..... U.S.A. at the moment.
- Mike: Has she got (5)..... job there?
- Rosie: Yes, she's working for (6)..... big company there.
- Mike: Do you send (7)..... emails to each other?
- Rosie: Yes, and I had (8)..... long email from her yesterday.
- Mike: What did she say in (9)..... email?
- Rosie: She said that she was living in (10)..... nice apartment in (11)..... centre of (12)..... Chicago.

D Complete the story by putting *a*, *an* or *the* into the gaps.

Yesterday I was sitting on (►) *the*..... 6 o'clock train when I saw (1)..... strange man walking along the platform. He came into the carriage of (2)..... train where I was sitting, and he sat in the seat opposite mine. He opened (3)..... newspaper and started reading it. On (4)..... front page of (5)..... newspaper, there was (6)..... picture of (7)..... bank robber. The words under (8)..... picture were: 'Wanted by the police'. It was (9)..... same man!