WHEN TO USE "THE"

GENERAL RULES

Use the, to refer to something which has already been mentioned.

Examples

- On Monday, an unarmed man stole $1,000 from the bank. **The thief** has not been caught yet.
- I was walking past Benny's Bakery when I decided to go into **the bakery** to get some bread.
- There is a position available in my team. **The job** will involve some international travel.

Use the when you assume there is just one of something in that place, even if it has not been mentioned before.

Examples

- We went on a walk in **the forest** yesterday.
- Where is **the bathroom**?
- Turn left and go to number 45. Our house is across from **the Italian restaurant**.
- My father enjoyed **the book** you gave him.

Use the in sentences or clauses where you define or identify a particular person or object.

Examples

- **The man** who wrote this book is famous.
- I scratched **the red car** parked outside.
- I live in **the small house** with a blue door.
- He is **the doctor** I came to see.

Use the to refer to people or objects that are unique.

Examples

- **The sun** rose at 6:17 this morning.
- You can go anywhere in **the world**.
- Clouds drifted across **the sky**.
- **The president** will be speaking on TV tonight.
- **The CEO** of Total is coming to our meeting.

Use the before superlatives and ordinal numbers.

Examples

- This is **the highest building** in New York.
- She read **the last chapter** of her new book first.
- You are **the tallest person** in our class.
- This is **the third time** I have called you today.

Use the with adjectives, to refer to a whole group of people.

Examples

- **The French** enjoy cheese.
- **The elderly** require special attention.
- She has given a lot of money to **the poor**.

Use the with decades.

Examples

- He was born in **the seventies**.
- This is a painting from **the 1820's**.

Use the with clauses introduced by only

Examples

- This is **the only day** we've had sunshine all week.
- You are **the only person** he will listen to.
- **The only tea** I like is black tea.

Proper nouns

Use the with names of geographical areas, rivers, mountain ranges, groups of islands, canals, and oceans.

Examples

- They are travelling in **the Arctic**.
- Our ship crossed **the Atlantic** in 7 days.
- I will go on a cruise down **the Nile**.
- Hiking across **the Rocky Mountains** would be difficult.

Use the with countries that have plural names

Examples

- I have never been to **the Netherlands**.
- Do you know anyone who lives in **the Philippines**?

Use the with countries that include the words "republic", "kingdom", or "states" in their names.

Examples

- She is visiting **the United States**.
- James is from **the Republic of Ireland**.

Use the with newspaper names.

Examples

- I read it in **the Guardian**.
- She works for **the New York Times**.

Use the with the names of famous buildings, works of art, museums, or monuments.

Examples

- Have you been to **the Vietnam Memorial**?
- We went to **the Louvre** and saw **the Mona Lisa**.
- I would like to visit **the Eiffel Tower**.
- I saw King Lear at **the Globe**.

Use the with the names of hotels & restaurants, unless these are named after a person.

Examples

- They are staying at **the Hilton** on 6th street.
- We ate at **the Golden Lion**.

Use the with the names of families, but not with the names of individuals.

Examples

- We're having dinner with **the Smiths** tonight.
- **The Browns** are going to the play with us.

When not to use "the"

Do not use the with names of countries (except for the special cases above).

Examples

- Germany is an important economic power.
- He's just returned from Zimbabwe.

Do not use the with the names of languages.
Examples

- French is spoken in Tahiti.
- English uses many words of Latin origin.
- Indonesian is a relatively new language.

Do not use the with the names of meals.
Examples

- Lunch is my favorite meal.
- I like to eat breakfast early.

Do not use the with people's names.
Examples

- John is coming over later.
- Mary Carpenter is my boss.

Do not use the with titles when combined with names.
Examples

- Prince Charles is Queen Elizabeth's son.
- President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

Do not use the after the 's possessive case
Examples

- His brother's car was stolen.
- Peter's house is over there.

Do not use the with professions
Examples

- Engineering is a well-paid career.
- He'll probably study medicine.

Do not use the with names of shops
Examples

- I'll get the card at Smith's.
- Can you go to Boots for me?

Do not use the with years
Examples

- 1948 was a wonderful year.
- He was born in 1995.

Do not use the with uncountable nouns

Examples

- Rice is an important food in Asia.
- Milk is often added to tea in England.
- War is destructive.

Do not use the with the names of individual mountains, lakes and islands

Examples

- Mount McKinley is the highest mountain in Alaska.
- She lives near Lake Windermere.
- Have you visited Long Island?

Do not use the with most names of towns, streets, stations and airports

Examples

- Victoria Station is in the centre of London.
- Can you direct me to Bond Street?
- She lives in Florence.
- They are flying into Heathrow.

LET'S PRACTICE

Try to do these activities online to practice

PRACTICE-1

PRACTICE-2

PRACTICE-3

PRACTICE-4