

# 5 the, a/an



## 1 Pronunciation of the

We pronounce *the* with /ə/ before consonant sounds (b, d, k, t, s, etc.):

*the book, the sports teacher*

We pronounce *the* with /i:/ before vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u):

*the apple, the English teacher*

## 2 Use of the

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

*The sun* is very hot today. (There's only one sun.)

Jamie's in *the garden*. (We only have one garden.)

Don't forget to lock *the front door*. (There's only one front door on our house.)

Can I see *the manager*? (There's only one manager.)

We DON'T use *the* before plural or uncountable nouns when we talk about things or people in general:

*I like children*. (children in general)

*Milk is good for you*. (milk in general)

Compare:

*I like the children*. (the children in that family)

*The milk tastes horrible*. (the milk in that bottle)

## 3 the or a/an?

We use *the*, not *a* or *an*, when it is clear which person or thing we are talking about.

Compare:

*I need to get a bus to the station.*  
(I don't know which bus.)

*The number 2 bus goes to the station.*  
(We know which bus.)

*Let's go to a restaurant this evening.*  
(There is more than one restaurant.)

*Let's go to the restaurant in Dean Street.*  
(We know which restaurant.)

*Would you like a biscuit?*  
(There is more than one biscuit.)

*Jason had the last biscuit!*  
(We know which biscuit.)

We use *a* or *an* when we use a noun for the first time, and *the* when we use it again:

*I bought a new coat and a dress yesterday. The coat is really warm.*

*'There's a really nice new café in the village.'*

*'Oh, do you mean the café with tables outside? Yes, it's great.'*

## Practice

### 1 Choose the correct sentence, A or B for each picture.



- A Shall I open a window?  
B Shall I open the window? ✓



- A Can I borrow a pen?  
B Can I borrow the pen?



- A I like a red dress.  
B I like the red dress.



- A Can you pass me a dictionary?  
B Can you pass me the dictionary?



- A I'm going to buy an umbrella.  
B I'm going to buy the umbrella.



- A Would you like a chocolate ice cream?  
B Would you like the chocolate ice cream?

### 2 Write *a*, *an* or *the*. Write – if we don't need *a*, *an* or *the*.

- 0 We're going shopping to buy ..... new computer.  
1 We can't use ..... computer in my office. It's not working.  
2 Can you answer ..... phone? I'm in ..... bathroom.  
3 Are you going to ..... kitchen? Can you get me ..... apple?  
4 'Do we need ..... onions?' 'Yes, and ..... pasta. Can you get ..... pasta from ..... Italian shop near the station?'  
5 Look at ..... moon. What a beautiful evening!

### 3 GRAMMAR IN USE Choose the correct words in *italics* in the email.

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Subject Our news

Australia is amazing – it's our third week here and everything is going well.  
 We moved into (0) *a* the lovely apartment last week and we're really enjoying it.  
 (1) *A* / *The* apartment is huge – it's got four bedrooms so (2) *a* / *the* children can  
 have (3) *a* / *the* bedroom each, which they love. We're only ten minutes from  
 (4) *a* / *the* sea so we go swimming a lot. We're going to (5) *a* / *the* party next  
 weekend – that will be fun – a lot of people are going and (6) *a* / *the* party will be  
 on the beach. There's (7) *a* / *the* very good restaurant very close to (8) *a* / *the*  
 apartment, and we eat there once or twice a week.  
 Come and see us soon! We're here for a year, so ...