

# 14

## GRAMMAR

# Articles

### Definite article

Basic uses of articles are assumed known.

- Classes

This is one way to refer to classes, and is perhaps more formal than using a plural:  
*The tiger is threatened with extinction.*

- National groups

Groups as a whole:

*The French eat in restaurants more than the English.*

Single examples are not formed in the same way:

*a Frenchman/woman, an Englishman/woman*

- Other groups

If these are clearly plural:

*the Social Democrats, the Rolling Stones*

- Unique objects

*the moon, the sun*

Note that there are other suns and moons in the universe.

*This planet has a small moon.*

- Titles

These tend to be 'unique':

*the director of studies*

If the title is post-modified (has a description coming after the noun), *the* is more likely, but not essential. Compare:

*She became President in 2008.*

*She became (the) president of the country in 2008.*

- Other titles

*The* may be part of the title, and so is capitalized.

Newspapers: *The Independent, The Sunday Times*

- Musical instruments

*Jane plays the flute.* (in general)

*The guitar is my favourite instrument.* (in general)

It is, of course, still possible to use an article when we refer to an object.

*There was a small brown flute in the window of the shop.*

- Emphatic use

This is heavily stressed and emphasizes the following noun.

*This hotel is the place to stay.*

See also Grammar 12.

- Geographical names

The following use *the*:

Rivers: *the Thames*

Mountain ranges: *the Alps*

Oceans: *the Mediterranean*

Unique features: *the Channel, the Arctic*

Compass points/areas: *the East, the Middle East*

Countries: collective or plural: *The United Kingdom, The Netherlands*

This does not apply to:

Mountain peaks: *Everest* (but *The Matterhorn*)

Lakes: *Lake Geneva*

Continents: *Asia*

Countries: *France*

The definite article is sometimes used before *Lebanon* and *Gambia*:

*The Lebanon      The Gambia*

- Place names

Post-modification, especially with ... *of* ... plays a role in place names.

Compare:

Leeds University/*The* University of Leeds

London Bridge/*The* Tower of London

If the first part of a place-name is another name, then normal rules about zero article apply.

Brown's Restaurant

*The Garden House Hotel*

The same applies in geographical names:

Canvey Island

*The Isle of Man*

- *Most* and *the most*

*Most hotels in England are very expensive.* (making a generalization)

*This is the most expensive hotel in town.* (talking about a specific hotel)

- Importance of context

The definite article refers to already mentioned items, and so its use depends on context.

*The Smiths had a son and a daughter. The son was in the Army and the daughter was training to be a doctor.*

*On the Saturday, there was a terrible storm.*

Here, *the Saturday* refers to a day in an area of time already mentioned.

*On the Saturday of that week ...*

## ADVANCED LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### Indefinite article

- Jobs

Compare: Tony is **a** builder. Tony was **the** builder of that house.

- In measuring

Three times **a** week. Fifty kilometres **an** hour.

£3.50 **a** kilo. £15,000 **a** year.

Formally, *per* can replace *a/an*.

She was convicted of driving at more than 120 kilometres **per** hour.

- Unknown people

Use of *a/an* emphasizes that a person is unknown.

A Mr Jones called while you were out.

### Zero article

- Names

Compare:

Matthew Smith is one of my favourite artists. (a person)

A Matthew Smith hangs in their bedroom. (a painting)

- Some unique organizations do not use *the*.

Parliament, but *The* (House of) Commons

- Streets

Most streets do not use an article.

Green Road

Godwin Street

Common exceptions are:

The High Street

The Strand

and street names without preceding adjectives. Compare:

Holly Drive

The Drive

### Translation problems

Study these sentences. Would you use an article in your language?

*I really like rugby.*

*A pound and a half of cheese.*

*I was holding it in my hand.*

*It's a film about homeless people.*

*Terry has flu. I've got a headache.*

**1 Complete the text by writing *a/an* or *the* in each space, or leave the space blank.**

It has been announced that for (1) .....<sup>the</sup>..... third consecutive month there has been (2) ..... rise in (3) ..... number of (4) ..... people unemployed, rather than (5) ..... fall that had been predicted. (6) ..... rise was blamed on (7) ..... continuing uncertainty over (8) ..... government economic policy, and couldn't come at (9) ..... worse time for (10) ..... Prime Minister, who is facing (11) ..... growing criticism over (12) ..... way (13) ..... present crisis is being handled. (14) ..... MPs are increasingly voicing (15) ..... fears that despite (16) ..... recent reduction of (17) ..... business taxes and cuts in (18) ..... interest rates, (19) ..... government still expects (20) ..... recovery of the economy to take three or even four years. To make (21) ..... matters worse, (22) ..... number of small businesses going into (23) ..... liquidation is still at (24) ..... record level, and (25) ..... housing market is showing no signs of recovery. Some backbenchers expect (26) ..... general election before (27) ..... end of (28) ..... winter unless there is (29) ..... rapid change of (30) ..... fortune.

**2 Underline the most suitable option. A dash (–) means that no article is included.**

- 1 Helen doesn't like the– cream cakes sold in a/the local bakery.
- 2 The– handball is fast becoming a/the popular sport worldwide.
- 3 We could see that the– Alps were covered in the– snow.
- 4 It's a– long time since I met a– lovely person like you!
- 5 Carol has a– degree in the– engineering from the– University of London.
- 6 At the– present moment, the– man seems to have the/an uncertain future.
- 7 The– problem for the– today's students is how to survive financially.
- 8 The– French enjoy spending holidays in the– countryside.
- 9 Please do not turn on a/the water-heater in a/the bathroom.
- 10 Sue bought a/the Picasso I was telling you about the– last week.

## ADVANCED LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### 3 Correct any errors in these sentences.

- 1 It's not a first-class accommodation unless it has a private bathroom.  
..... *It's not first-class accommodation unless it has a private bathroom.* .....
- 2 On this record twins play piano duet.  
.....
- 3 The halfway through meal we realized what waiter had said.  
.....
- 4 If the Mrs Hillier phones, say I'm away on trip.  
.....
- 5 There is a wonderful scenery in eastern part of Turkey.  
.....
- 6 Cocker spaniel is one of most popular pet dogs.  
.....
- 7 There is going to be fog and a cold weather all the next week.  
.....
- 8 I spent very interesting holiday at the Lake Coniston in England.  
.....
- 9 We are against war in general, so of course we are against war like this between  
superpower and developing country.  
.....
- 10 The burglaries are definitely on increase.  
.....

### 4 Complete each sentence with *a/an* or *the*, or leave the space blank.

- 1 I'm going to stand for Parliament at ..... *the* ..... next election.
- 2 When I left ..... station, I had to stand in ..... queue for  
..... taxi for ..... long time.
- 3 We took ..... trip around London and saw ..... Tower Bridge.
- 4 ..... happiness of the majority depends on ..... hard work for  
everyone.
- 5 ..... most main roads in this part of ..... country follow  
..... line of ..... roads built by ..... Romans.
- 6 Have you got ..... the new album by ..... *Anxious Frogs*?
- 7 If I had ..... time, I would like to take up ..... archery.
- 8 We spent ..... pleasant evening having ..... meal at .....  
Pizza Pan Restaurant.
- 9 ..... Nile flows right through ..... city.
- 10 ..... summer I spent in ..... USA was one of ..... best  
in my life.