

Articles

The Indefinite Article **a /an** is used

- Before a singular countable noun mentioned for the first time.

E.g. He has **a** *blue suit*.

Betty saw **an** *owl* last night.

- When the listener does not know which particular person or thing we mean.

E.g. Please give me **a** *pen*, Mary.

- “**a**” is used before a noun beginning with a **consonant** sound.

E.g. a *boy*

a *one-way road*

a *European*

a *uniform*

- “**An**” is used before a noun beginning with a vowel sound.

E.g. an *egg*

an *hour*

an *MTR train*

The Definite Article **the** is used

- To refer to a noun that has been mentioned before or that is known to both the speaker and the listener.

E.g. He has **a** dog and **a** cat. **The** *dog* is friendly, but **the** *cat* is not.

The *man* you met just now is my uncle.

- Before a comparative or superlative adjective.

E.g. Paul is **the** *fatter* one.

Compare: Paul is fatter than David.

Andrew is **the** *fattest* boy in our class.

- Before an ordinal number.
E.g. The *second* chapter is very interesting.
- Before a noun that is unique.
E.g. The *sun* rises in **the** *east*.
- With some adjectives to talk about a specific group of people.
E.g. We should be more concerned with **the** *poor* and **the** *sick*.
- Before musical instruments.
E.g. I started playing **the** *piano* when I was six.
- Before names of buildings, mountain ranges, seas, rivers, certain countries which start with UNITED or end in 's', and groups of islands.
E.g. The *Lee Theatre* has been pulled down.
I really want to climb **the** *Himalayas*.
The *Atlantic Ocean* separates **the** *United States* from **the** *United Kingdom*.

No article is used:

- With plural nouns or uncountable nouns in general.
E.g. Girls like to receive flowers.
Milk is good for both children and adults.
- Before names of games, months, seven days of a week, festivals, languages and meals.
E.g. John does not play football.
Mr. White is learning Chinese.
- Before words like bed, church, hospital, prison, school, university, etc. when these places are used or visited for their primary purposes.
E.g. They go to church on Sundays.
I go to bed at ten o'clock every night.

Exercise 1

Fill in the blanks with 'a' or 'an'.

1. He is too busy _____ person to take long holidays.
2. Johnny wants to make _____ trip to India.
3. Remember to add _____ 'S' if the word is plural.
4. The workers have formed _____ union.
5. _____ unusual thing happened last night.
6. China is such _____ fascinating country.
7. '_____ Mr. Gray came to your office this morning. I haven't seen him before,' said the secretary to her boss.
8. These eggs cost \$12 _____ dozen.
9. He is such _____ honorable man that I've ever met.
10. What _____ pretty face she has!

Exercise 2

Fill in the blanks with 'the' where necessary. Put a cross (X) if no article is needed.

1. Peter has just returned from _____ States.
2. We are not going to _____ school today. It's a holiday.
3. We usually have _____ dinner at 7 o'clock.
4. We went to Joe's birthday party last night. _____ food was nice.
5. Who is _____ headmaster of this school, please?
6. We are spending our holiday in _____ Philippines this summer.
7. My father plays _____ tennis every Sunday morning.
8. It's fun travelling by _____ air.
9. Few people have been to _____ Himalayas.
10. Visitor: Where's _____ office, please?
Girl: It's on _____ fifth floor.

Exercise 3

Fill in the blanks with 'a', 'an', 'the' or 'X'.

1. He told us that he would be back in _____ hour.
2. 'Will you be free on _____ Sunday?' Winnie asked Paul.
3. Don't hesitate to ask him for _____ advice if you need it.
4. Her aunt lives on _____ Lamma Island, doesn't she?

5. The ambulance men are attending to _____ injured.
6. There's _____ U-turn ahead.
7. Mrs. Chan has _____ 8-year-old daughter.
8. I have known _____ Lees for many years.
9. Mrs Lee said to Diana, 'I'm cooking the dinner. Please keep _____ eye on your little brother.'