**Articles**

**a/an (the indefinite article)**

The form a is used before a word beginning with a consonant, or a vowel with a consonant sound:

*a man a hat a university a European*

*a one-way street*

The form an is used before words beginning with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) or words beginning with a mute h:

*an apple an island an uncle*

*an egg an onion an hour*

or individual letters spoken with a vowel sound:

*an L-plate an MP an SOS an 'x'* a/an is the same for all genders:

*a man a woman an actor an actress a table*

**Use of a/an**

a/an is used:

A Before a singular noun which is countable (i.e. of which there is more than one) when it is mentioned for the first time and represents no particular person or thing:

/ *need a visa. They live in a flat. He bought an ice-cream.*

B Before a singular countable noun which is used as an example of a class of things:

*A car must be insured* = *All cars/Any car must be insured.*

*A child needs love =All children need/Any child needs love.*

C With a noun complement. This includes names of professions:

*It was an earthquake. She'll be a dancer. He is an actor.*

D In certain expressions of quantity: *a lot of a couple*

*a great many a dozen* (but *one dozen* is also possible) *a great deal of*

E With certain numbers

*a hundred a thousand*

Before half when half follows a whole number

*ll/2 kilos = one and a half kilos* or *a kilo and a half* But 1/2 *kg = half a kilo* (no a before *half),* though *a + half +*

noun is sometimes possible

*a half holiday a half portion a half share* With 1/3 1/4, 1/5etc a is usual *a third, a quarter* etc , but one is also possible

F In expressions of price, speed, ratio etc

*5p a kilo £1 a metre sixty kilometres an hour*

*lOp a dozen four times a day* (Here a/an = per )

G In exclamations before singular, countable nouns

*Such a long queue' What a pretty girl'* But *Such long queues' What pretty girls'* (Plural nouns, so no article

H a can be placed before Mr/Mrs/Miss + surname

*a Mr Smith a Mrs Smith a Miss Smith*

*a Mr Smith* means 'a man called Smith' and implies that he is a stranger to the speaker *Mr Smith,* without *a,* implies that the speaker knows Mr Smith or knows of his existence

(For the difference between a/an and one, see 4 For a few and a little, see 5 )

**Omission of a/an**

a/an is omitted

A Before plural nouns

a/an has no plural form. So the plural of *a dog* is *dogs,* and of

*an egg* is *eggs*

B Before uncountable nouns

C Before names of meals, except when these are preceded by an adjective

*We have breakfast at eight*

*He gave us a good breakfast*

The article is also used when it is a special meal given to celebrate something or in someone's honour

/ *was invited to dinner* (at their house, in the ordinary way) but

/ *was invited to a dinner given to welcome the new ambassador*

4 a/an and one

A a/an and one (adjective)

1 When counting or measuring time, distance, weight etc we can use either a/an or one for the singular:

*£1 = a/one pound £1,000,000 = a/one million pounds*

But note that in *The rent is £100 a week* the a before *week* is not replaceable by one

In other types of statement a/an and one are not normally interchangeable, because one + noun normally means 'one only/not more than one' and a/an does not mean this

*A shotgun is no good* (It is the wrong sort of thing )

*One shotgun is no good* (I need two or three )

**Special uses of one**

(a) one (adjective/pronoun) used with another/others

*One (boy) wanted to read, another/others wanted to watch TV*

*One day he wanted his lunch early, another day he wanted it late*

(b) one can be used before *day/week/month/year/summer/winter* etc or before the name of the day or month to denote a particular time when something happened

*One night there was a terrible storm One winter the snow fell early One day a telegram arrived*

(c) one day can also be used to mean 'at some future date'.

*One day you 'II be sorry you treated him so badly (Some day*would also be possible ) (For one and you, see 68 )

B a/an and one (pronoun)

one is the pronoun equivalent of a/an

*Did you get a ticket? ~ Yes, I managed to get one* The plural of one used in this way is some

*Did you get tickets? ~ Yes, I managed to get some*

**The (the definite article)**

**A Form**

the is the same for singular and plural and for all genders: *the boy the girl the day the boys the girls the days*

**B Use**

The definite article is used.

1 When the object or group of objects is unique or considered to be unique:

*the earth the sea the sky the equator the stars*

*2* Before a noun which has become definite as a result of being mentioned a second time:

*His car struck a tree; you can still see the mark on the tree*

3 Before a noun made definite by the addition of a phrase or clause:

*the girl in blue the man with the banner the boy that I met the place where I met him*

4 Before a noun which by reason of locality can represent only one particular thing:

*Ann is in the garden* (the garden of this house)

*Please pass the wine,* (the wine on the table)

Similarly, *the postman* (the one who comes to us), *the car* (our car), *the newspaper* (the one we read).

5 Before superlatives *and first, second* etc. used as adjectives or pronouns, and *only:*

*the first (week) the best day the only way*

C the + singular noun can represent a class of animals or things.

*The whale is in danger of becoming extinct.*

*The deep-freeze has made life easier for housewives* But*man,* used to represent the human race, has no article

*If oil supplies run out, man may have to fall back on the horse.* the can be used before a member of a certain group of people:

*The small shopkeeper is finding life increasingly difficult* the + singular noun as used above takes a singular verb. The pronoun is he, she or it

*The first-class traveller pays more so he expects some comfort.*

D the + adjective represents a class of persons: *the old* = old people in general (see 23)

E the is used before certain proper names of seas, rivers, groups of islands, chains of mountains, plural names of countnes, deserts, regions

*the Atlantic the Netherlands*

*the Thames the Sahara*

*the Azores the Crimea*

*the Alps the Riviera*

and before certain other names

*the City the Mall the Sudan*

*the Hague the Strand the Yemen*

the is also used before names consisting of noun + of + noun

*the Bay of Biscay the Gulf of Mexico*

*the Cape of Good Hope the United States of America*

the is used before names consisting of adjective + noun (provided the adjective is not *east, west* etc )

*the Arabian Sea the New Forest the High Street* the is used before the adjectives *east/west* etc + noun in certain names

*the East/West End the East/West Indies*

*the North/South Pole* but is normally omitted

*Smith Africa North America West Germany* the, however, is used before *east/west* etc when these are nouns

*the north of Spam the West* (geographical)

*the Middle East the West* (political)

Compare *Go north* (adverb in a northerly direction) with *He lives in the north* (noun an area in the north)

F the is used before other proper names consisting of adjective + noun or noun + of + noun

*the National Gallery the Tower of London* It is also used before names of choirs, orchestras, pop groups etc

*the Bach Choir the Philadelphia Orchestra the Beatles* and before names of newspapers *(The Times)* and ships*(the Great Britain)*

G the with names of people has a very limited use the + plural surname can be used to mean 'the family'

*the Smiths = Mr and Mrs Smith (and children)* the + singular name + clause/phrase can be used to distinguish one person from another of the same name

*We have two Mr Smiths Which do you want-1 ~ I want the Mr*

*Smith who signed this letter*

the is used before titles containing *(the Duke of York)* but it is not used before other titles or ranks *(Lord Olivier, Captain Cook),* though if someone is referred to by title/rank alone the is used

*The earl expected The captain ordered*

Letters written to two or more unmarned sisters jointly may be addressed *The Misses +* surname *The Misses Smith.*

**Omission of the**

A The definite article is not used

1 Before names of places except as shown above or before names of people

2 Before abstract nouns except when they are used in a particular sense

*Men fear death* but

*The death of the Prime Minister left his party without a leader*

3 After a noun in the possessive case, or a possessive adjective

*the boy s uncle = the uncle of the boy*

*It is my (blue) book = The (blue) book is mine*

4 Before names of meals

*The Scots have porridge for breakfast* but

*The wedding breakfast was held in her father s house*

5 Before names of games *He plays golf*

6 Before parts of the body and articles of clothing as these normally prefer a possessive adjective

*Raise your right hand He took off his coat* But notice that sentences of the type

*She seized the child's collar*

*I patted his shoulder*

*The brick hit John s face* could be expressed

*She seized the child by the collar*

*I patted him on the shoulder*

*The brick hit John in the face* Similarly in the passive

*He was hit on the head He was cut in the hand*

B Note that in some European languages the definite article is used before indefinite plural nouns but that in English the is never used m this way *Women are expected to like babies* (i e women in general) *Big hotels all over the world are very much the same* If we put the before *women* m the first example, it would mean that we were referring to a particular group of women

C *nature* where it means the spirit creating and motivating the world of plants and animals etc is used without

the

*If you interfere with nature you will suffer for it*

8 Omission of the before home, before church, hospital, prison, school etc and before work, sea and town

A home

When *home* is used alone i e is not preceded or followed by a descriptive word or phrase, the is omitted *He is at home*

*home* used alone can be placed directly after a verb of motion or verb of motion + object, i.e. it can be treated as an adverb

*He went home I arrived home after dark I sent him home* But when *home* is preceded or followed by a descriptive word or phrase it is treated like any other noun:

*They went to their new home.*

*We arrived at the bride's home.*

*For some years this was the home of your queen.*

*A mud hut was the only home he had ever known.*

B bed, church, court, hospital, prison, school/college/university

the is not used before the nouns listed above when these places are

visited or used for their primary purpose. We go:

*to bed* to sleep or as invalids to *hospital* as patients to *church* to pray to *pnson*as prisoners

to *court* as litigants etc. to *school/college/university* to study

Similarly we can be:

*in bed,* sleeping or resting *in hospital* as patients *at church* as worshippers *at school* etc. as students

*in court* as witnesses etc.

We can be/get back (or be/get home) *from school/college/university.*

We can *leave school, leave hospital,* be released *from pnson.*

When these places are visited or used for other reasons the is

necessary:

/ *went to the church to see the stained glass. He goes to the pnson sometimes to give lectures.*

C sea

We go to *sea* as sailors. To be *at sea =* to be on a voyage (as passengers or crew). But to go to or be *at the sea* = to go to or be *at the seaside.* We can also live *by/near the sea.*

D work and office

*work* (= place of work) is used without the:

*He's on his way to work. He is at work.*

*He isn 't back from work yet*

Note that *at work* can also mean 'working'; *hard at work* = working hard:

*He's hard at work on a new picture, office (=* place of work) needs the: *He is at/in the office.* To be *in office* (without the) means to hold an official (usually political) position. To be *out of office =* to be no longer in power.

E town

the can be omitted when speaking of the subject's or speaker's own town:

*We go to town sometimes to buy clothes.*

*We were in town last Monday.*

**this/these, that/those (demonstrative adjectives and pronouns)**

A Used as adjectives, they agree with their nouns in number. They are the only adjectives to do this.

*This beach was quite empty last year*

*This exhibition will be open until the end of May.*

*These people come from that hotel over there*

*What does that notice say'''*

*That exhibition closed a month ago*

*He was dismissed on the 13th. That night the factory went on fire*

*Do you see those birds at the top of the tree'''*

this/these/that/those + noun + *of + yours/hers* etc. or *Ann's* etc. is sometimes, for emphasis, used instead of

*your/her* etc. + noun:

*This diet of mine/My diet isn't having much effect.*

*That car of Ann's/Ann's car is always breaking down.* Remarks made with these phrases are usually, though not necessarily always, unfavourable

B this/these, that/those used as pronouns:

*This is my umbrella. That's yours*

*These are the old classrooms Those are the new ones.*

*Who's that (man over there)''1 ~ That's Tom Jones.* After a radio programme:

*That was the concerto in C minor by Vivaldi.* this is is possible m introductions:

ANN (to TOM): *This is my brother Hugh.*

ANN (to HUGH): *Hugh, this is Tom Jones*

TELEPHONE CALLER: *Good morning. This is/I am Tom Jones . . . I am* is slightly more formal than *This is* and is more likely to be used when the caller is a stranger to the other person. The caller's name + *here (Tom here)* is more informal than *This is.* those can be followed by a defining relative clause:

*Those who couldn 't walk were carried on stretchers* this/that can represent a previously mentioned noun, phrase or clause:

*They're digging up my road They do this every summer*

*He said I wasn 't a good wife Wasn 't that a horrible thing to say* ?

C this/these, that/those used with one/ones

When there is some idea of comparison or selection, the pronoun one/ones is often placed after these demonstratives, but it is not essential except when this etc is followed by an adjective:

*This chair is too low. I'll sit in that (one).*

*I like this (one) best*

*I like this blue one/these blue ones.*

**References**

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