

Articles

Definition

Articles are part of noun markers that indicate a noun is coming. They are considered as a special kind of adjectives which describe nouns and noun phrases they precede.

Types of Articles

Articles can be classified into three categories: Definite **'the'**, indefinite **'a/an'** and zero articles **'Ø'**.

The Use of Articles

- The use of articles depends on the class of nouns they precede; countable singular, countable plural, or non-countable as it is shown in the following table:

Count	Non-count
Singular a lion / the lion	Ø Water
Plural Ø lions / the lions	The water

- The definite article is used with the three classes of noun: singular countable, plural countable, and non-countable.
- The indefinite article is used with only singular countable nouns.
- The zero article is used with plural countable and non-countable nouns.
- **We use 'the' before a noun when:**
 - referring to something specific
 - there is only one of something (e.g. the cathedral)
 - the noun has been mentioned before
- **We use 'a/an' before a noun when:**
 - referring to something in general
 - mentioning something for the first time

- describing someone's profession (eg. I am a teacher).
- Use 'no article' before:
 - **Names of languages and nationalities:** Chinese, Russian (unless referring to the population of the place e.g. 'The Italians are known for their delicious food.').
 - **Names of sports:** cricket, baseball.
 - **Names of subjects:** Art, Mathematics.

Examples:

1. Somebody call **a** policeman!
 2. Did you see **the** film that was on Channel 4 last night?
 3. Would you like **a** glass of milk?
 4. Electricity has become more expensive recently.
 5. I love to swim in **the** ocean.
 6. The announcement lasted for 10 minutes.
- Do NOT use 'the' before:
 - **Lakes:** Lake Geneva, Lake Placids
 - **Mountains:** Mount Fuji, Mount Everest.
 - **Continents:** Europe, Asia.
 - **Most countries:** England, Sweden.
 - **Counties/states/provinces/regions:** Oxfordshire, Catalunya, California.
 - **Cities, towns, villages:** London, Paris.
 - **Islands:** Bali, Hawaii.
 - **Street names:** Main Street, 5th Avenue.
 - Use 'the' before:
 - **Rivers:** The Nile, The Mississippi.
 - **Mountain ranges:** The Andes, The Pyrenees.
 - **Deserts:** The Sahara, The Atacama.
 - **Oceans and seas:** The Pacific, The Mediterranean.
 - **Groups of islands:** The Maldives, The Seychelles.
 - **Some countries:** The USA, The Netherlands.
 - **Points on the globe:** The Equator, The North Pole.

➤ **Geographical areas:** The Middle East, The West.

Practice

Answer the questions with: ‘a/an’, ‘the’ or ‘no article’.

1. I love going on holiday to ____ Maldives.
2. Did you watch ____ the Mel Gibson film on TV last night?
3. Do you still live in ____ Bristol?
4. I’ve had ____ terrible headache all day.
5. The book is about someone who lives on ____ small island.
6. She lives in ____ Scotland now, but is from ____ Netherlands.
7. They speak ____ Chinese.
8. I’d love to go sailing along ____ Ganges river.
9. Who is that woman in ____ photograph?
10. Can I have _____ sugar in my coffee please?

Key answers

1. the
2. the
3. no article
4. a
5. a
6. no article, the
7. no article
8. the
9. the
10. no article