

# Articles

## A Starting activities

### 1 I'd like a pair of jeans with a belt

*alan* and *the* contrasted

- 1 Work in pairs. You are buying clothes. Say what you want using *alan* and adding a brief description using *with*, like this: *I'd like a pair of jeans with a belt.*
- 2 Work as a class. Make a list of your sentences.
- 3 Work in pairs. Take turns to complain about everything on the list, using *the*. You can be as angry as you like when you complain.  
Example: *The pair of jeans I bought is too small.*



- 2 Work as a class. List all the differences between men and women that people in the class thought of.
- 3 Work in pairs or groups. Decide which differences you disagree with and which you agree with. Put them in order, with the one you disagree with most at the top of your list.

### 3 Paper is made from trees

Zero article with uncountable nouns

- 1 Work in pairs or groups. Write as many true facts about each of the uncountable nouns as you can. Example: *When snow melts it becomes water.*

**Uncountable nouns:** *water, gold, paper, snow, oil, wood, rain, sand, meat, salt*

- 2 Read your sentences to the class. You get a point for every sentence with the facts correct. You lose a point if the facts in your sentence are wrong. Example: *Water freezes at ten degrees centigrade.* (Wrong, lose one point.) The winner is the pair or group with the most points.

### 2 Are men and women equal?

Zero article with countable nouns

- 1 Work in pairs. Tell your partner all the ways that men and women are different. Include stereotypes and clichés. (You don't have to agree with everything you say.) Start each sentence with *men* or *women*, like this: *Women cry more. Men are stronger.*

## B Grammar guide

---

- 1 **The indefinite article (*a/an*)**
- *A/an* is used with singular countable nouns only (*a book, an orange*).
  - Before vowels (*a, e, i, o* and *u*) *a* changes to *an* but the change depends on the pronunciation and not just on the spelling. So we say *an hour* (*an* because the *h* is not sounded) but *a uniform* and *a European* (*a* is used before *u* and *eu* when they sound like the *y* in *you*).
  - The usual meaning of *a/an* is 'only one and it does not matter which one'.  
*I'd like a cup of coffee, please.* (= one cup of coffee and any cup of coffee)
  - When a singular uncountable noun is mentioned for the first time, use *a/an*.  
*Alan took a book off the shelf.*
  - We can use *some/a lot of/any* with plural countable nouns.  
*I've got some nails, but I haven't got any screws.*
- 
- 2 **The definite article (*the*)**
- *The* is used with singular countable nouns (*the book*), with plural countable nouns (*the books*), and with uncountable nouns (*snow, spaghetti*), in their specific sense (not in their general sense).  
*The snow was over a metre deep last winter.*  
Other determiners are also possible before uncountable nouns in their specific sense.  
*Is there any snow on the motorway, or is it clear?*
  - The most common meaning of *the* is 'the one you know about' ('a specific and definite one'). In context, we often know about something because it has already been mentioned.  
*Alan took a book off the shelf. He opened the book and started to read.*
- 
- 3 **Zero article**
- There is no article before:  
plural countable nouns in their general sense: *Cats can see in the dark.*  
uncountable nouns in their general sense: *Snow at night is beautiful.*
  - There is no article before proper names (*John*) and titles (*Mr*).
- 
- 4 **Phrases with indefinite, definite, or zero article**
- The indefinite article is used:  
in exclamations: *What a mess!*  
in descriptions of frequency, speed and cost: *once a day, 30 km an hour*
  - The definite article is used:  
when there is only one (or only one which is important to the speaker):  
*the butcher's, the zoo, the police*  
for nationalities and *the* + adjective: *the British, the blind, the disabled*  
for regions, mountain ranges, oceans and seas: *the Middle East, the Alps*  
for hotels, restaurants, pubs, theatres and cinemas: *The Albion, the Odeon*
  - There is no article (zero article):  
for some institutions used for their main purpose (schools, hospitals, churches etc.): *Richard goes to school in the village.* (BUT *The school is opposite our house.*)  
before the names of meals: *Let's have lunch.* (BUT *The lunch was cold.*)  
for continents, countries and cities: *Asia, Italy* (BUT *the UK*), *Athens*  
for mountains and lakes: *Mount Snowdon, Lake Eyre*  
for streets (except *the High Street* and *the Oxford road*, which means 'the road which leads to Oxford'): *West Street, New Road*

# C Activities

## 1 Maggie's restaurant

Indefinite, definite and zero article

- 1 Work in pairs or groups. Put in any missing articles and make any other changes necessary to make complete sentences.

A note from Helen to Maggie, January 16

Mr Briggs from restaurant supplies shop phoned. Said he can't deliver fridge and cooker until this afternoon. I've got to go to butcher's. Can you stay in restaurant, let restaurant supplies man in and wait by phone? Have taken booking for Saturday. It's in reservation book.

Some headlines in the local newspaper, January 23

**New restaurant opens in Fulchester**  
**Maggie's best new restaurant in town**  
**Food delicious at Maggie's**  
**All that is best in Thai and Malaysian food**

A note from Maggie to Helen, February 10

Can you prepare tomato roses for tonight, please? (Peel ripe firm tomato so skin comes off in one piece. Wind piece of skin round and round then spread petals of tomato rose in palm of your hand.) I will put advertisement in newspaper for waiter/waitress, so please be patient just little bit longer.

An advertisement in the local newspaper, March 5

Waiter/Waitress wanted for Maggie's restaurant. Evenings and Sunday lunchtimes only. Experience of Thai and Malaysian food advantage.

A note from Helen to Maggie, March 5

This is quick note to say I'm not coming in this evening. Or tomorrow. Maybe never. Sorry. Can't cope with being waitress and cook and doing washing up and all rest of it any more. Have done tomato roses for this evening.

An excerpt from 'The Best Restaurants in Britain Guide'

*Maggie's Restaurant, Fulchester*  
Unusual small restaurant (six tables) serves Thai and Malaysian food. Book in advance. Food excellent but service poor.

- 2 Work as a class. Tell the story of Maggie's restaurant in your own words and then write it down, underlining all the indefinite and definite articles and marking all the zero articles.

## 2 Seventy-five-word stories

The 'rules' for articles

Work in pairs or groups. Write a story that is exactly seventy-five words long (not including the title). Your story must include the following (see the Grammar guide for examples of all of them):

- (i) *a* (not *an*) + a word which starts with a vowel
- (ii) *an* (not *a*) + a word which does not start with a vowel
- (iii) *the* + an uncountable noun in its specific sense
- (iv) zero article before a plural countable noun in its general sense

## D Accuracy practice

### 1 Which is correct, (a) or (b)?

- 1 Julie goes to (a) **church** (b) **the church** every Sunday.
- 2 Go straight ahead to (a) **church** (b) **the church**, then turn left.
- 3 I'm a bit upset. Lee's in (a) **hospital**. (b) **the hospital**. He's quite ill.
- 4 My sister works at (a) **hospital**. (b) **the hospital**. She's a cleaner.
- 5 In Britain, children go to (a) **school** (b) **the school** from nine o'clock until four o'clock every day.

### 2 Which is correct, (a) or (b)?

- 1 My wife is away on business in (a) **Far East**. (b) **the Far East**.
- 2 It's the biggest theme park in (a) **UK**. (b) **the UK**.
- 3 The highest mountain in (a) **the Himalayas** (b) **Himalayas** is (a) **Mount Everest**. (b) **the Mount Everest**.
- 4 They live on a small island in (a) **Pacific**. (b) **the Pacific**.
- 5 She's travelling in (a) **the Europe** (b) **Europe** and (a) **Middle East**. (b) **the Middle East**.

### 3 Which is correct, (a) or (b)?

- 1 (a) **Spaghetti** (b) **The spaghetti** you ate yesterday was for today's dinner.
- 2 I like (a) **spaghetti**. (b) **the spaghetti**.
- 3 We often go to the park to look at (a) **flowers**. (b) **the flowers**.
- 4 (a) **Computer games** (b) **The computer games** are one of the things in the modern world that old Mr Tomkins doesn't like.
- 5 There's been an accident. Call (a) **police** (b) **the police**.

### 4 Put in *a/an, some, any* or *a lot of* only where necessary.

- 1 Peter and Alison haven't got \_\_\_\_\_ children.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ children would be \_\_\_\_\_ problem for them at the moment as they have \_\_\_\_\_ work to do and they don't have \_\_\_\_\_ money.
- 3 Unfortunately they don't have \_\_\_\_\_ interesting hobbies either. I think one of them should have \_\_\_\_\_ hobby.
- 4 Their lives consist entirely of \_\_\_\_\_ work. \_\_\_\_\_ people live like that.
- 5 They aren't even interested in \_\_\_\_\_ travel. Sad, isn't it?

### 5 Write this letter again, putting in articles where necessary.

A letter from Doris Winter to the manager of her local bank:

I went to bank yesterday in order to arrange for cashpoint card and credit card but I was told that I had to make written application. My name is Doris Winter and I am German national, staying in United Kingdom for one year to improve my English. I was also asked to provide details of my bank account in Germany. Account is at bank in Hamburg. Enclosed cheque has my account number. I understand that credit card they provided cannot be used here. You may contact manager (Mr Fuchs) who will provide reference for me if you require one.