

# THE FUNCTIONS OF ARTICLES WITH COMMON NOUNS

## **The Indefinite Article**

used before nouns in the singular

# 1. Nominating function (to name an object)

e.g. He gave her a cigarette and lighted it.

There came **a tap** at the door, and **a small elderly man** entered the room, wearing a **black cap**.

# The Indefinite Article

The IA names an object which is usually new to the hearer



used to introduce a new element in the sentence.

the noun with the indefinite article frequently becomes the centre of communication and is marked by strong stress.

e.g. *They brought with them **a small child, a governess and a dog.***

*The table was covered with **a white cloth.***

## 2. The idea of oneness

a) **a** hundred, a thousand, a minute, a mile, etc.

b) after the negative not - not a word, not a trace, not a thought, etc.

c) in set phrases - one at a time, at a draught (He emptied his glass at a draught), a stitch in time saves nine, etc.

# The indefinite article

With uncountable nouns

3. Aspective function (to bring out a special aspect of the notion expressed by the noun)

e.g. *A dull burning anger rose in his chest.*

*He had almost a supernatural courage.*

the noun is usually qualified by an attribute bringing out a special aspect

the indefinite article is devoid of the idea of oneness

# The Definite Article

With countable nouns

2 functions



1) individualizing

(with singular and plural nouns)

distinct from the others of the same kind

*e.g. 1) As we stood on **the steps**, we felt the smell of fallen leaves coming from **the garden**.*

2) generic

(with singular nouns)

a composite image of the class

*2) **The tiger** has always had the reputation of being a man-eater.*

# The Definite Article

## With uncountable **nouns**

### 3) restricting

restricts the material to a definite quantity, portion or to a definite locality

or

restricts the notion to a particular instance

e.g. *He slowly pulled on his gloves, concentrating on each fold in **the leather**.*

***The work** seemed to consist chiefly of interviewing young women for jobs in department stores.*

# Absence of the Article

## 1) the nominating function

With common countable plural nouns

e.g. Marion came round the corner of the house, wearing **gardening** gloves and **a very old skirt**.

With uncountable nouns

e.g. *Last night I felt **friendship** and **sympathy** for Henry, but today he has become an enemy.*

***Life** goes on, changeless and ever changing.*

*Winterbourne asked for **water** and drank thirstily.*



## The Use of Articles with Countable Nouns

### singular

a/an – nominating

*e.g. He shut the door behind his wife  
and handed me **a cigar**.*

the - individualizing

*e.g. He didn't enjoy **the** cigar because  
it was damp.*

### plural

without any article - nominating

*e.g. He shut the door behind his wife and  
handed me **cigars**.*

the –individualizing

*e.g. He didn't enjoy **the** cigars because it  
was damp.*

*Note*

*Things* = circumstances, conditions, events, the present state of affairs.

without any article in this meaning

*e.g. Your refusal will only make things worse.*

*Your father is making a mess of things.*

*You take things too seriously.*

# Attributes

## limiting

indicates such a quality or characteristic of an object/a group of objects which makes it distinct from all other objects of the class.

e.g. She sat listening but **the sound of her pounding heart** covered any other sound.

Alice smiled to him and took **the letter he held out to her.**

THE

## descriptive

describes an object/a group of objects or gives additional information about it. This kind of attribute narrows the class to which the object belongs.

e.g. He smiled at the girl as she came down the stairs wearing a **red raincoat with a hood.**

To the left there was a **long room with a narrow table strewn with periodicals.**

A/THE/-

division of attributes into two classes is not very helpful 

most attributes - not limiting or descriptive

## ATTRIBUTES – NEUTRAL

a number of attributes are distinctly limiting owing to their form of expression.

## The use of articles with countable nouns modified by adjectives

Attributes  adjectives  escriptive 

Do not affect the use of articles

*His office was in a **fine, gay, busy little street.***

*The woman looked at me shrewdly and there was a glint of humour in **the dark eyes.***

*We lay lazily on the steep bank, looking at **the tall reeds.***

## *Note*

*all* and *whole* are descriptive attributes



the use of articles is determined by the situation

e.g. *He never stayed a whole evening with us.*

*He spent the whole evening watching the telly.*

*such* is also descriptive, but it is never combined with the definite article.

e.g. *Your father is such a handsome man.*

*I'm not prepared to believe such things about my son.*

# Adjectives as limiting attributes

- Contrast

*e.g. Will you pack my things for me? I want **the little suit-case** as **I'll** be away only one night.*

- Adjectives in the superlative degree

*e.g. She was **the smartest girl** in the room.*

# Notes

## Note 1

e.g. He's the most experienced doctor I know (the superlative degree of *experienced*).

He's a most experienced doctor (most is an adverb of degree (крайне, чрезвычайно))

## Note 2

- always serve as limiting attributes: *right, wrong, very, only, main, principal, central, left, right, same, coming, following, present, former, latter.*

e.g. It just seems to be **the wrong** way to go about it.

My chief is **the right man in the right place.**

My mother was **the only person** whom I told what had happened.

My relatives take a very grave view of **the present situation.**

- other adjectives commonly, though not always serve as limiting attribute: *proper, adjacent, alleged, lower, necessary, opposite, previous, so-called, upper, usual.*



## Note 3

- *Next* and *last* → generally the definite article.

e.g. *We shall probably eat at **the next** table to him.*

*My father had not read **the last** seven pages of the book.*

- But when these adjectives modify nouns denoting time, there is no article at all.

e.g. *He said: "No, you can't see her. She went to London **last week**"*

*He said: "I am determined not to spend more than ten pounds on my clothes **next year** and so I'll manage by myself."*

- In narration there is a fluctuation in the use of articles with nouns modified by *next*: the definite article or no article.

e.g. *We had not been sitting long in the drawing-room before Mr March was arranging a timetable for **the next day**.*

*I sent her a wire and she met me at the station **next day**.*

- *a best suit* ('выходной костюм') and *a best seller* ('ходкая книга') are set phrases.

- *An only child* is a set phrase ('единственный ребенок у родителей').

# Other

- **Singular**

- The definite article:

only two objects of the same description.

*e.g. He pulled on **the other** glove and said he would run along to his office.*

- The indefinite article:

there are more than two objects of the same description

(‘еще один’, ‘любой другой’, ‘не такой’, ‘иной’).

*e.g. Could I have **another** cup of tea?*

- **Plural**

- The definite article:

a definite number of objects is divided into two definite groups.

*e.g. One of the three people had already arrived. I wanted to know when the other guests were expected.*

- No article:

if some objects are divided into two groups and either one of the groups or both of them are indefinite.

*e.g. I was thinking of **other** people in the same position.*

# Articles with countable nouns modified by numerals

- Cardinal numerals - descriptive attributes.

*e.g. He had refused **three invitations** to golf, his excuse to his friends being that he had no time.*

*e.g. By candlelight **the two men** seemed of an age if indeed not of the same family.*

- Ordinal numerals - limiting attributes.

*e.g. During the **second** week in October she met him in Oxford Street.*



- May not be used to indicate order but acquire the meaning 'one more' or 'another' the indefinite article

*e.g. They must have a **third** race to decide who is the real winner.*

- Note 1. The above mentioned rule does not apply to the numeral *first*.

- *a first night* ('премьера') and *a first prize* are set

# Articles with countable nouns modified by

## **participles**

- in pre-position



Single word



descriptive

## ***the ing-form***

- In post-position



A phrase



descriptive or  
limiting



nonprepositional  
or  
prepositional

# Examples

- It was a very small room, overcrowded with furniture.
- I adopted the tone used by my uncle Henry.
- He looked at me with a mocking smile.
- There was no answer and he sent a telegram saying that he needed some work done urgently.
- John had an odd way of looking at things. He took the path leading to the lonely cottage.
- He could not bear the thought of leaving her in such a

Articles with countable nouns modified by  
infinitives

## Attributes

- tend to be descriptive

*e.g. I made an attempt to smile.*

- Sometimes may become a limiting attribute.

*e.g. They did not have the money to buy the house.*

# Articles with countable nouns modified by clauses

1) attributive

2) appositive

# Attributive clauses

- introduced by the relative pronouns *who*, *whose*, *which* and *that*

*e.g. I will not describe the pictures that Strickland showed me.*

*His pictures gave me an emotion I could not analyze.*

*He wandered about the place like a man who has nothing else*

- introduced by the relative adverbs *where* and *when*

- **asyndetically**



# Attributive clauses

## Non-defining

- can be removed from the sentence without destroying its meaning.
- always descriptive
- do not influence the choice of the article

e.g. *She asked me a question, which I did not hear.*

*When he at last got to the office, where he spent so many dull hours, he gave a sigh of relief.*

## Defining

- closely connected with the antecedent
- cannot be left out without destroying the meaning of the sentence.
- may be limiting or descriptive

e.g. *He took the cigarette that Robert offered him.*

*In the back of her mind was the memory that it was the city her friend came from.*

# Appositive clauses

- introduced by the conjunction *that* and are similar to object clauses
- disclose the meaning of the noun.
- modify only certain nouns: *idea, feeling, hope, thought, impression, sense* and the like.

*e.g. He had the feeling that all his efforts proved to be futile.*

- generally limiting

*e.g. The idea that he can be of use made him happy.*

- Occasionally the noun modified by an appositive clause is used with the indefinite article.

*e.g. I had a growing feeling that time was running out.*

Articles with countable nouns modified by nouns in the common case

- usually descriptive.

*e.g. He sat on a kitchen chair.*

At the study door he stopped for a moment.

- Sometimes serve as limiting attributes.

*e.g. Do you believe we can leave the Sawbridge question where it is?*

# Articles with countable nouns modified by nouns in the genitive case

## specifying genitive

- denotes a particular person or thing

*my mother's picture*

*the man's voice*

*the river's bed*

- the article refers to the noun in the genitive case and is chosen in accordance with the general rules

the boy's

a boy's books

Robert's

## classifying (descriptive) genitive

- refers to a whole class of objects

*sheep's eyes*

*a doctor's degree*

*a mile's distance.*

the article refers to the head-noun

the noun in the genitive case serves as a descriptive attribute. →

The article refers to the head-noun

the noun in the genitive - the plural form

BUT

preceded by the indefinite article:

*a soldiers' canteen*

*a girls' school*

# of-phrase

## Descriptive A/THE

**quality** — *a book of interest, a feeling of relief* etc.

**quantity or measure** — *a temperature of + 20°* etc.

**composition** — *a flock of birds* etc.

**material** — *a scarf of thick wool* etc.

**content** — *a cup of tea* etc.

**age** — *a man of middle age* etc.

**size** — *a sailor of middle height* etc.

**comparison** — *an angel of a wife* (=a wife like an angel) etc.

## Limiting THE

*the house of my neighbour*

*the wife of a miner*

*the foot of the mountain*

*The collar of a shirt*

*the smoothness of a new machine*

*the shot of a gun*

*the development of science*

*the roaring of the ocean*

*the name of John*

*The city of New York*

*the position of a teacher*

*the colour of amber*

*the shadow of a tree*

*the outline of a boat.*

# Articles with countable nouns modified by prepositional phrases

**descriptive (a)**

or

**limiting (b)**

*e.g. a) But you must know that a marriage with a boy in a jazz  
band wouldn't  
last a year.*

*b) The darkness was almost complete, and the boats in the  
harbour were  
swaying to the rhythm of the sea's breathing.*