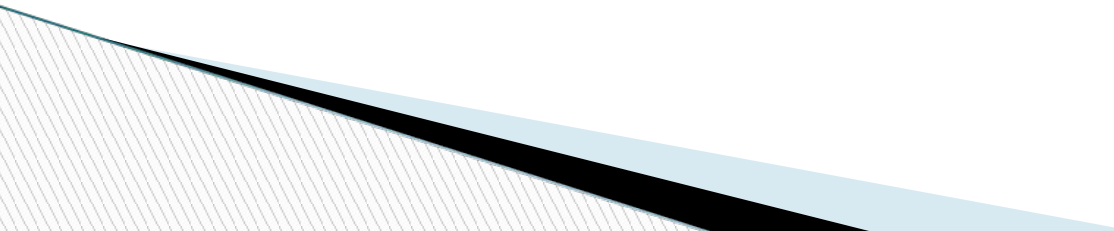


# Articles (a, an, the)

- Introduction
  - The correct use of the articles is one of the most difficult points in English grammar.
  - Luckily, most article mistakes do not matter too much.
  - If we leave all the articles out of a sentence, it is usually possible to understand it.
  - However, it is better to use the articles correctly if possible.
- 

# A/An

1. We use a/an with a noun to talk about just one member of that class. (A/An means “ONE”)
  - E.g. A boy phoned this morning.
  - E.g. Ming is a Chinese name.
2. We use a/an when we define or describe people or things (when we say what class or kind they belong to)
  - E.g. He’s a teacher. She’s a pretty woman
  - E.g. “What’s that?” “It’s a civet.”

3. We don't use a/an with a plural or uncountable noun, because a/an means "ONE".

- E.g. My parents are accountants.

- E.g. Would you like some sugar?

4. We don't use a/an with an adjective alone (without a noun).

- Compare:

- E.g. She's a very good doctor.

- E.g. She's very good.

5. We don't use a/an together with another determiner (e.g. my, your)

- E.g. She's a friend of mine. (NOT She's a my friend)

# The

1. THE means something like “you know which one I mean”. It’s used with uncountable, singular and plural nouns.
  - E.g. the water    the chair    the stars
2. We use THE:
  - (a) To talk about people and things that we have already mentioned.
    - E.g. She’s got 2 children: a girl and a boy. The boy’s sixteen and the girl’s twenty-one.

(b) When we are saying which people or things we mean.

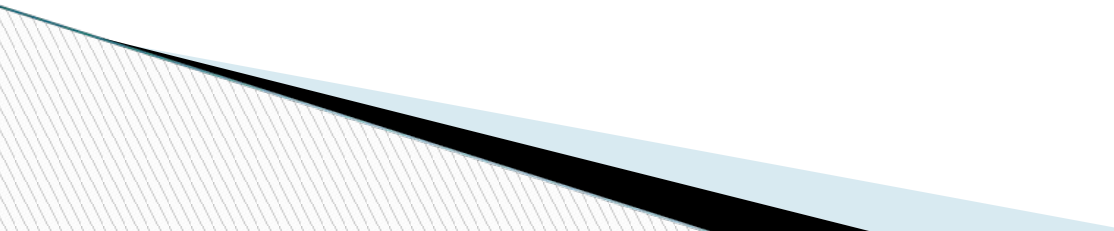
- E.g. Who's the boy in the van there with Doris?

(c) When it is clear from the situation which people or things we mean.

- E.g. Could you open the window?

- E.g. Could you pass the salt?

- E.g. "Where's Doris?" "She's in the kitchen."



2. We do not use THE with other determiners (e.g. my, this, some, etc.)

- This is my aunt. (NOT ..the my aunt.)

- I like this car. (NOT ...the this car.)

3. We do not usually use THE with proper names (There are some exceptions)

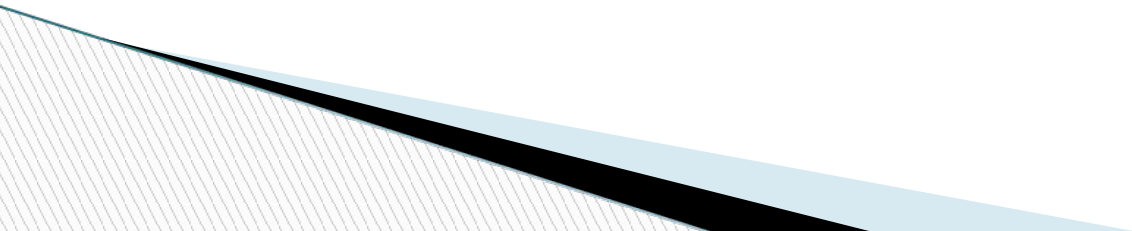
- Stella lives in Australia.

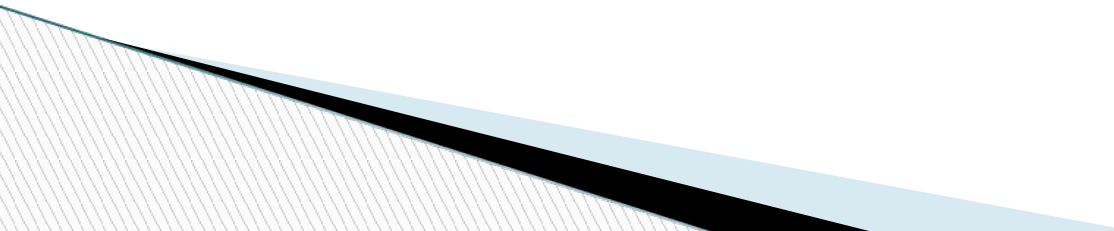
4. We do not usually use THE to talk about things in general – THE does not mean “ALL”

- Books are expensive. (NOT The books...)



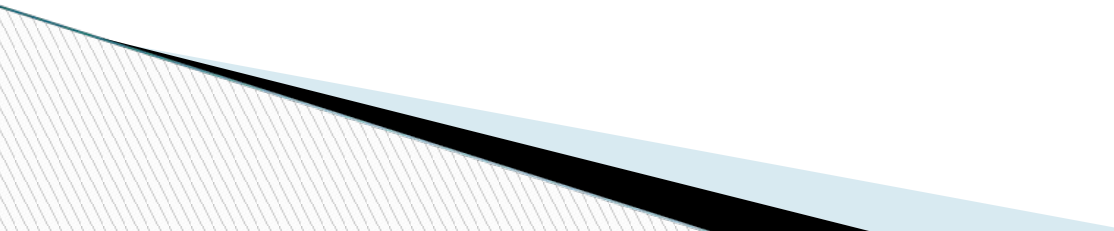
# Articles: the difference between *a/an* and *the*

- \_\_\_\_ doctor must like people.
  - (= any doctor, any one of that profession)
  - My sister's \_\_\_\_ doctor.
  - (= one of that profession)
  - I'm going to see \_\_\_\_ doctor.
  - (= you know which one: my doctor)
- 

- I live in \_\_\_ small flat at \_\_\_ top of \_\_ old house near \_\_\_town hall.
  - (a small flat: there might be 2 or 3 at the top of the house – it could be one of these.
  - (an old house: there are lots near the town hall – it could be any one)
  - (the top: we know which top; it's the top of the house where the person lives – a house only has one top.
  - (the town hall: we know exactly which town hall is meant: there's only one in the town.
- 

# Articles: talking in general

1. We don't use THE with uncountable or plural nouns to talk about things in general – to talk about all books, all people or all life.
  - THE never means “all”.
  - Compare:
  - E.g. Did you remember to buy the books?  
(= particular books which I asked you to buy)
  - E.g. Books are expensive today.  
(= we are talking about books in general – all books)

- E.g. I'm studying the life of Beethoven.
  - (= one particular life)
  - E.g. Life is hard in Hong Kong today.
  - (= this means "all life")
  - E.g. "Where's the cheese?" "I ate it."
  - E.g. Cheese is made from milk.
  - E.g. Could you turn the light on?
  - E.g. Light travels at 300,000 km a second.
- 

2. Sometimes we talk about things in general by using a singular noun as an example. We use a/an with the noun (meaning “ANY”)

- E.g. A baby deer can stand as soon as it is born.

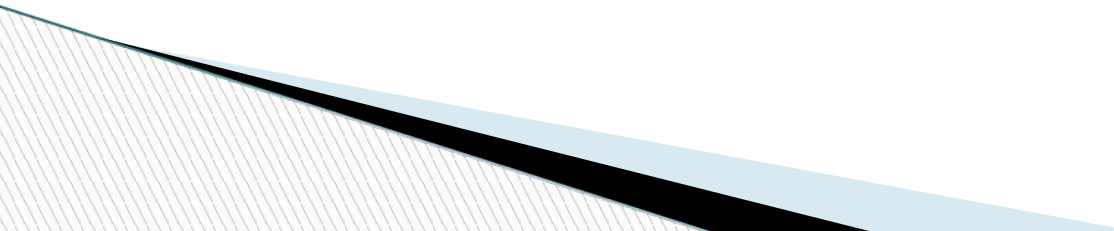
- E.g. A child needs plenty of love

We can use THE with a singular countable noun in generalizations (but not with plural or uncountable nouns). This is common with the names of scientific instruments and inventions, and musical instruments.

- E.g. Life would be quieter without the telephone.

- E.g. The violin is more difficult than the piano.

3. These common expressions have a general meaning:

- I prefer the mountain to the sea.
  - I hate the rain.
  - Would you rather live in the town or the country?
  - We usually go to the seaside for our holidays.
  - I like lying in the sun.
  - I like the noise of the wind.
- 

# Articles: countable & uncountable nouns

	a/an	The	No article
Singular countable	a dog	The dog	
Plural countable		The dogs	Dogs
uncountable		The water	Water

# Articles: special rules & expressions

1. Common expressions without articles
  - To school at school from school
  - To/at/from university/college
  - To/at/in/into/from church on TV
  - To/in/into/out of bed/prison/hospital
  - To/at/from work to/at sea
  - to/in/from town at night
  - At/from home for/at/to breakfast/lunch
  - By car/bus/bicycle/plane/train/tube/boat
  - On foot go to sleep watch television (TV)

## 2. Possessives

- A noun that is used after a possessive has no article.
- E.g. Harold's car
- Hong Kong's economic problems

## 3. Musical instruments

- We usually use the article THE when we talk in general about a musical instrument
- E.g. I'd like to learn the piano
- But THE is not used when we talk about jazz or pop music
- E.g. This recording was made with Miles Davis on trumpet.

## 4. All and both

- We sometimes leave out THE after both, and after all when there is a number.
- E.g. Both (the) children are good at Chinese.
- E.g. All (the) seven students passed the exam.
- We can say all day, all night, all week, all summer/winter, all year, without THE.
- E.g. I've been waiting for you all day.

## 5. Seasons

- We can say in spring or in the spring, in summer or in the summer, etc. There is little difference.

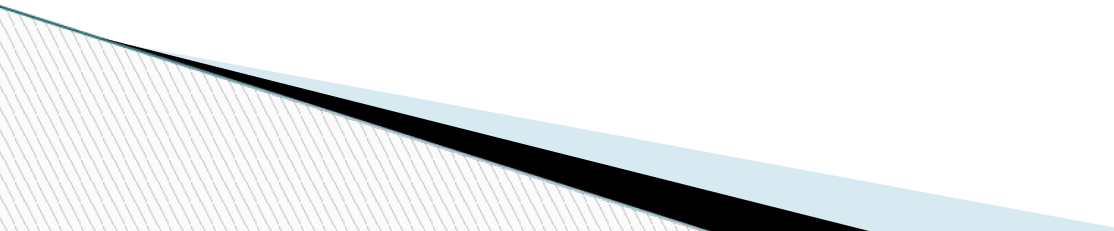
## 6. Jobs and positions

- We use the article with the names of jobs.
- E.g. My sister is a doctor.
- But THE is not used in titles like Queen Elizabeth, President Bush

## 7. Exclamations

- We use a/an in exclamations after what, with singular countable nouns
- E.g. What a life!

## 8. Nature

- E.g. I love the mountains.
  - E.g. Helen spends her time lying in the sun.
- 

## 9. Place-names

- ▣ Seas (the Atlantic)
- ▣ Mountain ranges (the Himalayas)
- ▣ Island groups (the West Indies)
- ▣ Rivers (the Rhine)
- ▣ Deserts (the Sahara)
- ▣ Hotels (the Grand Hotel)
- ▣ Cinemas and theatres (the Odean, the Playhouse)
- ▣ Museums and art galleries (the British Museum, the Tate)
- ▣ We usually use NO Article with:
  - ▣ Continents, countries, states, counties, departments, etc. (Africa, Brazil, Texas, Berkshire)
  - ▣ Town (Oxford)
  - ▣ Streets (Prince Edward Street)
  - ▣ Lakes (Lake Michigan)

- Exceptions: countries whose name contains a common noun like *republic*, *state(s)*, *union*.
  - The People's Republic of China
  - The USA            The UK    The USSR
  - The Netherlands    The Hague
  - We don't usually use THE with the names of the principal buildings of a town
  - E.g. Oxford University    Oxford Station
  - Names of single mountains vary – some have articles, some do not
  - Everest, the Matterhorn
- 

## 10. Newspaper

- The names of newspaper usually have THE.
  - E.g. The Time    The Washington Post
  - Most names of magazines do not have THE.
  - E.g. Punch    New Scientist
- 