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**DL/1st Year**

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**ARTICLES**

1. **What is an aricle?**

Articles are determiners; they come before the nouns they modify. In other words an article determines the meaning of the noun it modifies; therefore it functions as an adjective.

English has three types of articles: indefinite (a/an), definite (the), and zero article (Ø).

1. **Types of Articles**
   1. **The Indefinite Article (a/an)**
      1. **Form**

The form **a** is used before a word beginning with a *consonant sound*.

***a*** man; ***a*** table, ***a*** hospital; ***a*** university;***a*** union

The form **an** is used before a word beginning with a *vowel sound* or a *mute h*.

***an*** office; ***an*** apple; ***an*** elephant; ***an*** hour; ***an*** heir.

**Note**: 1. Choose a/an according to pronunciation not spelling.

* ***a*** house; ***an*** honour
* ***a*** university; ***an*** umbrella
* ***a*** one-hour lesson***; an*** ocean

1. In *hour, honour, honest, heir*, the /h/ is not pronounced; it is silent or mute.
2. If the noun is modified by an adjective, the choice between a/an depends on the initial sound of the adjective that immediately follows the article.

* ***a*** broken egg; ***a*** European country
* ***an*** honourable man; ***an*** unusual problem

**2.1.2 Use**

**a.** The article *a/an* is called indefinite because it is used before a singular countable noun that is not specific (not definite) to the listener. In other words, the listener does not know exactly the person, place, or thing the speaker means.

- I live in **a** flat. (= this flat is not known to you; it is unspecific or indefinite to you.)

- You seem very ill, so you need to consult **a** doctor. (doctor is unspecific; you do not know the doctor I mean.)

**b.** The indefinite article is also used before a singular countable noun representing any person or anything.

- **A student** must work hard to succeed. (= any student)

- **A parrot** can repeat what you say. (= any parrot)

- **A teacher** must be patient. (=any teacher)

- **A child** needs affection. (= any child)

**c.** The indefinite article is used before a singular countable noun mentioned for the first time in a conversation.

- I met **a** woman. The woman was very kind. (= first mention of *woman*)

- She bought **a** bag. The bag is red and lovely. (= first mention of *bag*)

Note: The indefinite article can not be used with plural countable nouns or uncountable nouns. We **can not** say:

* I have **a problems** or **An apples** are red.
* **A milk** is good for you or Do you need **a money**?

The indefinite article a/an is also used:

**d.** before labels referring to:

- **Origin**: He is **an** Algerian.

- **Occupation**: I am **a** teacher.

- **Religion**: I am **a** Muslim.

- **Politics**: He is **a** Republican.

**e.** before some expressions of frequency, price, and speed with the meaning of *per*.

- She goes to London once **a** week.

- They cost me 100 dinars **a** pair.

- He drives with the speed of 60 km **an** hour.

**f.** before some expressions of quantity.

Examples: **a** few, **a** little, **a** lot of, **a** great deal of.

**g.** before some expressions referring to illnesses.

Examples: **a** cold, **a** headache, **a** sore throat…etc.

**h.** in exclamations before singular countable nouns.

- What **a** hot day!

- What **a** pretty girl!

**2.2. The Definite Article**

*The* is pronounced /ðə/ before consonant sounds.

The day; the girl; the sea

*The* is pronounced /ðɪ / before vowel sounds.

The end; the earth; the ear

**2.2.1. Use**

The definite article *the* is used before singular countable nouns, plural countable nouns, and uncountable nouns that are specific. In other words, the listener knows exactly the person, place, or thing the speaker means. This may be because:

1. The noun has been mentioned before; for instance, in the previous sentence.

* She has got two children: *a boy* and *a girl*. **The** *boy* is five, and **the** *girl* is three. ( a boy, a girl= first mention; the boy, the girl= second mention)
* I saw *a man*. **The** *man* was wearing a hat.

1. It is clear in the situation the specific person or thing the speaker means even if he has not mentioned the noun before. For example, in a room we talk about *the light, the floor, the door, the carpet*…etc.

* Can you close **the** *door*, please? (the listener understands that the speaker means a specific door = the door of this room)
* I took a taxi to **the** *station*. (the noun station is specific = the station in this town)
* Could you pass **the** *sugar*, please? (specific sugar = the sugar on this table)

1. There is a phrase or a clause that comes after the noun and makes it specific.

* **The** *writer* of this book is famous. (the listener understands that the speaker does not mean any writer; he means the writer of this book)
* **The** *flowers* you gave me were wonderful. (specific flowers = the flowers you gave me)
* **The** *ink* in my pen is red. (specific ink= the ink in my pen)

The definite article is also used :

1. before a singular countable noun that refers to the whole class.

* **The** *tiger* is a dangerous animal. (= all tigers)
* **The** *eagle* is a bird of prey. (= all eagles)

1. before an adjective to refer to a class of people.

* We collected money to donate to the institution for **the** *deaf*. (deaf people)
* **The** *rich* must help **the** *poor*. (rich people and poor people)

Note: The + adjective takes a plural verb. The young are impatient.

1. before superlatives.

* Most people think that Saturday is **the** *worst* day of the week.

1. before musical instruments. Sarah learnt to play **the** *piano*.
2. before historical events. **The** *Algerian Revolution*.
3. before nouns of which there is only one.

* **The** *sun* shone down on the earth.

1. before certain proper names of canals, deserts, forests, oceans, rivers, seas, and plural islands, lakes, and mountains.

* **the** Atlantic Ocean  **the** Black Forest
* **the** Hawaiian Islands  **the** Panama Canal

1. before the name of a country or state including the word *of*, the type of government, or a plural form.

* **The** Republic of Ireland
* **The** United Kingdom
* **The** Philippines

1. before some time expressions, such as: *the morning, the afternoon, the past, the future, the evening*…etc.
   1. **The Zero Article**
2. The zero article is used with plural countable nouns to make general statements. That is, to talk about people or things in general.

* Ø Boys are stronger than Ø girls (this is a general statement= in general, boys are stronger than girls)

We **can not** say: A boys are stronger than a girls.

Or : The boys are stronger than the girls.

* Ø Computers are expensive. (= the speaker talks about computers in general)

It is **wrong** to say: The computers are expensive

Or : A computers are expensive.

* Ø Vegetables are good for you. (= vegetables in general)

It is **wrong** to say: A vegetables are good for you.

Or : The vegetables are good for you.

1. The zero article is also used with uncountable nouns to make general statements.

* I do not like Ø tea. (= in general)

We **can not** say: I do not like a tea.

Or : I do not like the tea.

* Ø Coffee is not good for you. (= coffee in general)

It is **wrong** to say: A coffee is not good for you.

Or : The coffee is not good for you.

* Ø Water is precious. (= water in general)

It is **wrong** to say: A water is precious.

Or : The water is precious.

The zero article is also used with:

1. Names of people and titles of people.

* Ø Leila is a good student.
* Ø Mr.John Smith is a kind person.

1. Names of days, months, seasons, and festivals.

* I have a lecture on Ø Tuesday.
* I prefer Ø summer to Ø winter.
* In Ø Ramadan Muslims fast.

1. Names of meals, except when they are preceded by an adjective.

* We have Ø breakfast at six.
* He gave us *a* good breakfast.
* *The* wedding breakfast was held in her grandfather’s house.

1. Expressions of transport, such as: *to go by car, by bus, by ship, by train*…etc.
2. Nouns referring to places, such as: school, hospital, prison, work, bed, college, university, mosque …etc; when they are used for their primary purpose.

* She goes to Ø school every day. (=as a learner to study)
* Now I am at Ø work. (= as a worker, I am working)

Note: When those places are visited for other reasons, the definite article is used.

Compare:

* He went to Ø bed. (got into it to sleep)
* He went to *the* bed. (he may not have lain down and gone to sleep)
* She is in Ø hospital. (= as a patient)
* She is in *the* hospital. (she is there to visit somebody who is a patient there)

1. Names of cities, towns, or states, such as: Ø Algiers, Ø Florida.
2. Names of countries and continents.

* Ø Algeria; Ø Italy
* Ø Africa; Ø Asia

1. Names of singular mountains, islands, and lakes.

* Ø Mount Everest
* Ø Fiji Island
* Ø Lake Michigan

**References**

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