

Unit 1

Article



Objectives

After the completion of this unit, you would be able to—

- explain definite articles and their uses.
- explain indefinite articles and their uses.
- express exceptional rules and usage of no articles.

Overview:

Lesson 1: *Indefinite Article*

Lesson 2: *Definite Article*

Lesson 3: *No Article and Exceptions*



Answer Key

Lesson 1 : Indefinite Article



‘A’ and ‘an’ are indefinite articles as they generalize the noun rather than specifying it.

Nouns which are uncountable do not take indefinite articles. **Only countable nouns take indefinite articles.**

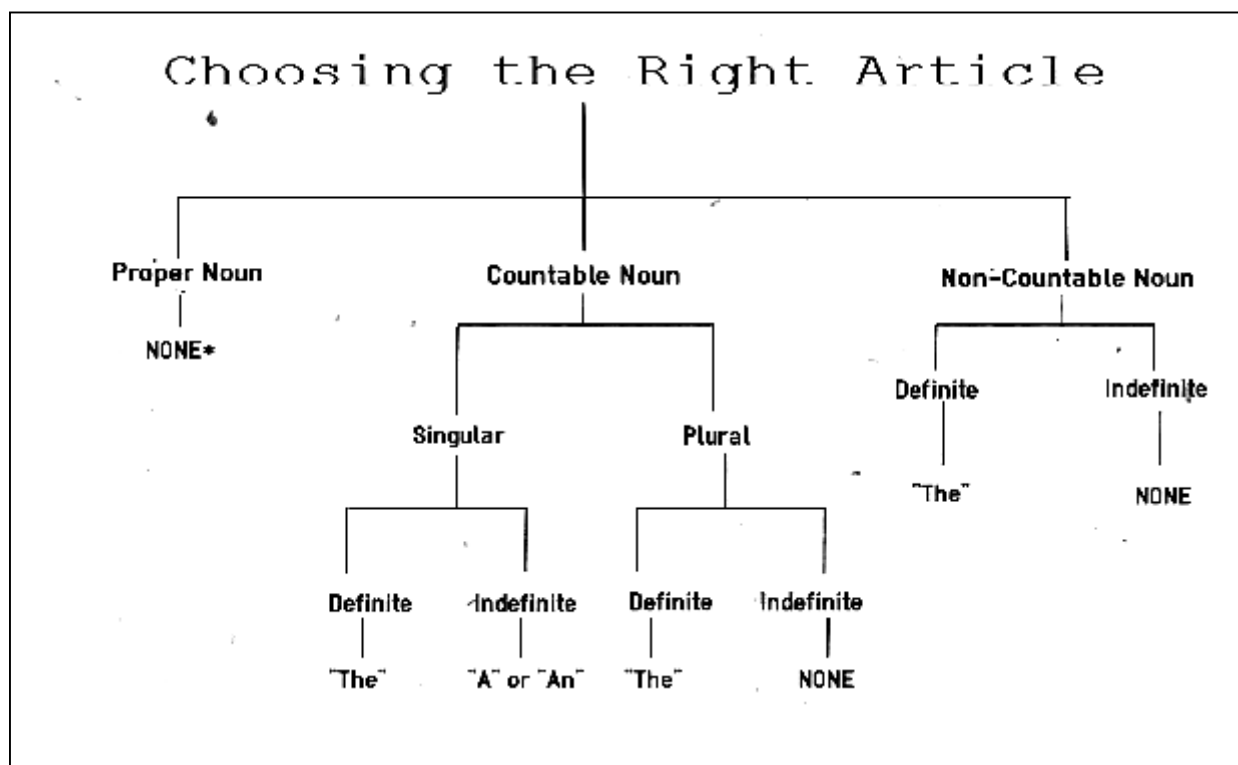
‘An’ is used before vowel sounds. ‘A’ is used before consonant sounds.

- The following nouns are uncountable:

Accommodation	Behaviour	Damage	Luck	Permission	Traffic
Advice	bread	Furniture	Luggage	Progress	Weather
Baggage	Chaos	Information	News	Scenery	Work

- Compare these countable and uncountable nouns:

Countable	Uncountable
I'm looking for <i>a job</i> . What <i>a beautiful view</i> ! It's <i>a nice day</i> today. We had <i>a lot of bags</i> and cases. <i>These chairs</i> are mine. That's <i>a good suggestion</i> .	I'm looking <i>for work</i> . (not a work) What <i>beautiful scenery</i> ! It's <i>nice weather</i> today. We had <i>lot of baggage/luggage</i> . <i>This furniture</i> is mine. That's <i>good advice</i> .



- When two nouns are together like the following, sometimes we write them as one word and sometimes as two separate words.

For example:

a headache, a toothpaste, a weekend, a car park, a road sign

- **Note the difference between:**

A sugar bowl (perhaps empty) and a bowl of sugar (= a bowl with sugar in it)

A shopping bag (perhaps empty) and a bag of shopping (= a bag full of shopping)

- **When we use noun + noun, the first noun is like an adjective. It is normally singular, but the meaning is often plural.**

For example:

a bookshop is a shop where you can buy books, an apple tree that has apples.

In the same way we say:

A three-hour journey (=a journey that takes three hours)

A ten-pound note (not pounds)

A four-week course (not weeks)

Two 14-year-old girls (not years)

A six-page letter (not pages)

Position of the indefinite article

- i) ***a/an is an article. So it belongs to the class of determiners. As a determiner, its position is before the adjective.***

Example:

A good book

An intelligent girl

- ii) ***a/an is placed after predetermines like many/much/rather/quite/what:***

1. *What a man he is! (not, a what man)*

2. *Many a man was injured. (not, a many man)*

3. *He gave such a talk that everybody fell asleep. (not, a such talk)*

4. *She is quite a beauty. (not, a quite beauty)*

- iii) ***a/an is placed after adjectives. They are personified by as/so/too/how/quite:***

5. *How fine a place it is!*

6. *It is too absurd as an answer.*

Usage on the basis of sound

The choice between a/an is determined by the initial sound of the word following it. If the word begins with a consonant sound, use 'a'; if the word begins with a vowel sound, use 'an'.

i) a + consonant sound

'a' is used before a word beginning with a consonant sound.

Example:

A book, a cat, a dog, a fan, a university, a European

Note:

a) Words beginning with 'u/eu' have an initial 'y' sound, so they take 'a'.

For example:

a unit, a utensil, a union, a utopia, a eunuch, a ewe, a eulogy, a euphemism

b) 'o' pronounced like 'w' is a consonant sound and takes 'a'.

For example:

a one-eyed man, a one-rupee note, a one-act play

ii) an + vowel sound

'an' is used before a word beginning with a vowel sound.

For example:

An apple, an egg, an inkpot, an hour, an honour, an heir

iii) Words beginning with a mute 'h' take 'an', not 'a':

For example:

Heir, honest, honour, hour, honorary, honorarium

1. *He is an honest man.*
2. *We had an hour's rest.*
3. *It is an honour to me.*
4. *This is an honorary post.*

Note:

a + hotel, historical, habitual, humble

1. *That is a hotel.*
2. *This is a historical novel.*
3. *He is a habitual drunkard.*
4. *This is a humble beginning.*

iv) an + acronyms/abbreviations

an is used before acronyms/abbreviations beginning with f, h, l, m, n, r, s, x because each of these consonants has an initial vowel sound e/a:

f (ef), h (eich), l (el), m (em), n (en), r (aar), s (es), x (eks)

For example:

1. *He is an FBI agent.*
2. *This is an HMT watch.*
3. *He is an LLB.*
4. *He is an MP.*
5. *He is an NCC officer.*
6. *He has sent SOS.*
7. *This is an X-ray telescope.*

Note:

- a) MS is an abbreviation for manuscript. The abbreviated form is usually pronounced manuscript, not 'em-es', so it takes a.

For example:

This is an MS (em-es) of my new book.

This is a MS (manuscript) of my new book. Not an.

- b) Xmas is an abbreviation for Christmas but it is usually pronounced as 'Christmas', not 'Ex-mas', so it takes a. it pronounced ex-mas', the article should be an:

For example:

a Xmas (Christmas) card. (not, an)

This is an Xmas (Ex-mas) card.

v) a/an + adverb/adjective + noun

The choice of a/an does not always depend on the initial sound of what follows it immediately. It can be an adjective or adverb placed before the noun:

For example:

An honest man, an extremely difficult problem, a great artist, a very arousing story

vi) an + number

'an' is used before a number beginning with a vowel sound.

For example:

This is an 18-player team.

He is an 80-year old man.

But:

This is a 5-year old child.

Usage on the basis of structure

i) a/an + singular countable

a/an is used before a singular countable noun that is mentioned for the first time and does not refer to a particular person or a thing:

1. *What's this? This is a bus.*
2. *What's that? That is an orange. (the is not possible here)*

Note:

a) A singular indefinite countable noun cannot be used without 'a/an'.

We don't say:

This is pen. That is elephant.

b) uncountable without 'a/an'

An uncountable singular noun does not take 'a/an':

This is water/sugar. (not, a water/sugar)

This is ink/oil (not, an ink/oil)

ii) a/an + noun (as a class)

'a/an' is used before a singular countable noun when it represents a class, when one means all/every.

For example:

A triangle has got three sides. (all triangles)

A horse is animal. (all horses)

iii) a/an + noun (profession etc)

'a/an' is used before a singular noun denoting profession, occupation, post, rank, caste, community, religion, nationality or political loyalty.

For example:

1. *He is a teacher.*
2. *She is a Christian*
3. *He is a German.*
4. *She is a socialist.*

iv) a/an + noun (degree/title)

'a/an' is used before a noun denoting a degree/title.

For example:

He is a graduate.

She is an M.Sc. (not, She is B.A. or He is Ph.D.)

v) a/an + noun (rate)

'a/an' is used before a noun expressing the rate.

For example:

Fish sells at fifty taka a kilo.

She can type forty words a minute.

Bananas sell at ten taka a dozen.

He goes home once a week.

vi) a/an + verb-noun (verb used as a noun), a/an is used before a verb used as a noun:

1. *He has gone for a walk.*
2. *Have a look at this book.*
3. *He gave a talk on grammar.*
4. *I have a bath at 9 o' clock.*
5. *This razor gives me a good shave.*

We don't say:

She is going for swim/ride now.

He took her out for drive.

vii) An uncountable noun takes 'a/an' when it is treated as a countable noun, that is used in a particular sense.

For example:

It is a cold day. (Countable)

It is cold in the winters. (Uncountable)

Drink a glass of milk at night. (Countable)

The milk is warm. (Uncountable)

Note:

Notice how a/an + uncountable becomes countable in these cases:

<i>to have a weakness for</i>	<i>to have a pain</i>
<i>to have a fancy for</i>	<i>to have a taste for</i>
<i>hunger for</i>	<i>to take pride in</i>
<i>to have a good time</i>	<i>to have a fascination for</i>
<i>to have a dream of</i>	<i>to have a thirst for</i>
<i>to have a knowledge of</i>	<i>to have a bad time</i>
<i>to have a headache</i>	<i>to have a chance</i>
<i>to make a noise</i>	<i>to run a temperature</i>
<i>to be in a hurry</i>	<i>to light a fire</i>
<i>to be in a rage</i>	<i>to be in a temper</i>

Note: The use of 'a' is optional in catch cold/catch a cold.

viii) a/an + abstract noun

'a/an' is used before an abstract noun to denote a 'kind of quality'.

For example:

He has received a good education.

The applicant has a working knowledge of English.

ix) a/an + a person's name

'a/an' is used before Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss + surname to indicate that his/her identity is not known to the speaker.

For example:

A Mr Smith wants to see you.

A Mrs Menezes gave me his letter.

Note:

a) The use of one instead of 'a/an' is dated.

b) 'a/an' is used before the name of a person or country or province or state to mean 'one like'.

For example:

We have to build a new Bangladesh.

He thinks he a Maradona.

x) a/an and one

When 'a/an' means 'one' they can be interchanged.

For example:

I bought a pen/one pen.

He bought an egg/one egg.

She has got a car/one car.

In this sense one is more emphatic than a/an.

Note:

a) 'a/an' does not always means 'one', and is therefore not replaceable by one in the following:

A bird has got wings. (not, one bird)

He is an engineer. (not, one engineer)

She has got a headache. (not, one headache)

b) with hundred/thousand etc. one is preferred to a/an because one is more precise of the two. therefore, in banking and legal documents a/an is not used in place of one.

For example:

I gave him a watch for one thousand taka. (not, a thousand taka)

But we say:

About a hundred houses were damaged.

A - AN

The difference between A and AN

A and **AN** have the same meaning. **A** and **AN** are indefinite articles. The difference depends on the sound at the beginning of the next word.

When the next word starts with a
CONSONANT SOUND

A

a book a frog
a car a lemon
a dog a truck

When the next word starts with a
VOWEL SOUND

AN

an apple an orange
an egg an umbrella
an insect an actor

BE CAREFUL! The **SOUND** of the letter is important

a house BUT an hour

The **H** at the beginning of **hour** is **silent**.

an uncle BUT a university

The **U** at the beginning of **university** sounds like **YOU**.

This rule applies to all words after **A** or **AN** (including adjectives, adverbs...)

a cold day an easy lesson
a very crazy person an interesting class



Exercise

Fill the gaps with appropriate indefinite articles:

1. She doesn't own ____ car.
2. He is ____ actor.
3. He is ____ excellent teacher.
4. She has ____ euro.
5. I only have ____ hour for lunch.
6. Rahim wants ____ bicycle.
7. We finally found ____ apartment.
8. Samir works for ____ Egyptian company.
9. Can I pay with ____ ATM card?
10. What ____ shame!



Answer Key

1. a 2. an 3. an 4. a 5. an 6. a 7. an 8. an 9. an 10. a

Lesson 2 : Definite Article



‘The’ is a definite article. It refers to something and somebody particularly.

Usage

i) Referring Back:

‘The’ is used before a definite noun. When a noun is mentioned again, that is, when it refers back to a noun mentioned already, it takes ‘the’.

Example:

*This is an old palace. People believe that **the** palace was built 500 years ago.*

ii) Representing Class:

‘The’, like a/an, is used before a singular countable noun mentioned for the first time when it represents a class, that is, when ‘the’ means ‘all/every’.

For example:

***The** camel is the ship of the desert.*

***The** lion is a wild animal.*

Note:

Man/mankind meaning ‘all men/women’ does not take a/an/the:

For example:

Man is mortal. (not a/the man)

Mankind is searching for meaning.

iii) ‘the’ is used before adjectives or participles to represent a class of people:

the rich, the poor, the dead, the dying, the injured/wounded

For example:

The rich are not necessarily happy

The blind deserve our sympathy.

iv) ‘the’ is used before an adjective to denote a quality:

For example:

the white/yellow of an egg

the evil, the good, the beautiful

v) ‘The’ used before a noun considered unique or extraordinary, that is, a noun treated as equivalent to a superlative adjective. In this construction ‘the’ means ‘the best, the only, or precisely’, so it has a heightening effect on the noun it modifies:

For example:

She is the bride for him.

This is the place for our picnic.

He is the authority on the subject.

- vi) **‘The’ is used before a noun whose identity is common knowledge or can be easily inferred. In this construction ‘the’ denotes a person’s title, rank, or profession etc:**

For example:

The President The Prime Minister

The Principal the King/Queen

The Prophet the bench/bar

The Postman the press/media

- vii) **‘The’ is used before a singular common noun (place/person) that can be easily inferred from the situation:**

For example:

the police station, the post office, the station, the radio

1. *Would you close the gate, please?*

2. *She is listening to the radio.*

3. *He will be on the air tonight.*

4. *Turn on/off the tap, please.*

Note:

a) radio always takes ‘the’:

She is listening to the radio.

What’s on the radio now?

b) ‘The’ use of the before television is optional:

What’s on the television now?

What’s on television now?

But the is not used in the expression ‘watch TV’:

They are watching TV. (not, the TV)

- viii) **‘The’ is used before common nouns denoting musical instruments:**

For example:

She is playing the violin/piano/sitar.

He is playing the drum/tabla.

He is accompanied on the violin by an Englishman. (not, She is playing harmonium.)

- ix) **‘The’ is used before a noun denoting a unit of measure to mean ‘every’:**

For example:

We buy petrol by the gallon/litre.

They are paid wages by the hour/week.

- x) 'The' is used before both countable and uncountable nouns (singular or plural) that are made definite by:**

a) preposition/preposition phrase

the boy with long hair

the woman in black

the milk in the bottle

the boys/girls/teachers of this school

b) a relative clause

the book/pen/milk/sugar/she bought yesterday

the water/tea/coffee he drinks every day

the birds/animals that live in a forest

- xi) 'The' is used before a noun placed by the side of a noun clause (that-clause).**

For example:

1. The fact that Columbus discovered America is known to all.

- xii) 'The' is used before a singular countable noun to denote an attribute/a quality.**

For example:

The monkey in man still survives.

The dancer in her is dead.

- xiii) 'The' is used before adjectives in the superlative degree:**

the best book, the most beautiful, one of the wisest men, one of the most useful animals

Note: 'the' is used in the construction like best/like most:

Which do you like best/most? (not, the best/the most)

N.B: 'the' is not used before most/least when it is used in the sense of 'very'.

For example: *It is a most interesting story.*

- xiv) 'The' is used before adjectives in the comparative degree (of the two):**

For example:

She is the taller of the two girls.

He is the wiser of the two boys.

Note: *the ... the*

While expressing parallel increase/decrease 'the' is used twice:

The older you grow the wiser you become.

The more you have the more you want.

xv) 'The' is used before ordinal numbers and 'only':

For example:

the first prize, the only hope, the only son, the second son

xvi) 'The' is used before few/little + relative clause:

For example:

I have read the few books I have.

She has spent the little money she had.

xvii) 'The' is used before the names of ranges of mountains and hills:

For example:

the Himalayas

the Alps

the Khasi hills

the Vindhyas

the Rocky Mountains

Note: 'the' is not used before the following peaks or mountains:

Everest, Kailas, Kanchenjunga, Mont Blanc, Olympus, Snowdon, Mount Abu, Parasnath

Example:

The highest mountain in Alps is Mount Blanc.

We use mount (=mountain) and lake in the same way (without the):

Mount Everest (not the) Mount Etna, Lake Superior, Lake Constance

They live near the lake.

They live near Lake Constance. (not the Lake Constance)

xviii) 'The' is used before names of groups of islands:

the Andamans

the West Indies

the Hebrides

the Maldives

the Bahamas

the Canaries

Note: 'the' is not used before individual islands:

Crete, Malta, Bermuda, Ireland, Sicily, Sri Lanka

xix) 'The' is used before names of gulfs, canals, seas, and oceans:

the Atlantic (ocean)
the Pacific (ocean)
the Indian (ocean)
the Mediterranean Sea
the Red Sea
the Persian Gulf
the Gulf of Mexico
the Panama Canal
the Suez Canal

xx) 'The' is used before names of rivers/channels:

<i>the Padma</i>	<i>the Thames</i>
<i>the Brahmaputra</i>	<i>the Avon</i>
<i>the Danube</i>	<i>the Euphrates</i>
<i>the Ganga</i>	<i>the Amazon</i>
<i>the Rhine</i>	<i>the English Channel</i>
<i>the Tyne</i>	<i>the Mississippi</i>
<i>the Nile</i>	<i>the Bangla Channel</i>

xxi) 'The' is used before the name of these republics/kingdom/countries/states:

<i>the Netherlands</i>	<i>the Sudan</i>
<i>the Congo</i>	<i>the Czech Republic</i>
<i>the UK</i>	<i>the USA</i>
<i>the Philippines</i>	<i>the GDR</i>
<i>the Netherlands</i>	

Compare:

Have you been to Canada or the United States?

xxii) 'The' is used before the names of holy/great books:

<i>the Quran</i>	<i>the Bible</i>
<i>the Mahabharat</i>	<i>the Iliad</i>

xxiii) 'The' is used before names of newspaper:

<i>the Daily Star</i>	<i>the Daily Observer</i>
<i>the Times</i>	<i>the Guardian</i>
<i>the Statesman</i>	<i>the Economist</i>
<i>the Washington Post</i>	<i>the Dawn</i>

Note:

a) The is not used after noun +’s:

I haven’t yet read today’s Statesman. (not, the today’s Statesman)

b) Names of magazines/periodicals are now usually used without ‘the’:

Punch, Outlook, Time Sunday, Today, Vogue

xxv) ‘The’ is used before specifying any of the cardinal directions:

the east/west the north/south

xxv) ‘The’ is used before names of inventions:

the telephone the microscope

the wheel the steam engine

Who invented the telephone? (not, telephone)

xxvi) ‘The’ is used before a common noun considered unique:

the sun/moon the sky/earth

the world/universe the sea/air

xxvii) ‘The’ is used before these nouns:

cathedral, cinema, pictures, theatre, office, station, museum, zoo

Example:

I am going to the pictures.

She is going to the cinema/theatre.

They are going to the zoo.

He is in the office now.

(not, She is going to station/museum.)

xxviii) ‘The’ is used before the parts of one’s body and articles of clothing:

The stone hit him on the shoulder.

The trouser you bought fits you well.

I held him by the tie/collar.

More Uses

a) the sky, the sea, the ground, the country, the environment:

We looked up at all the stars in the sky. (Not in sky)

Would you like to live country? (= not in a town)

We must do more to protect the environment. (=the natural world around us)

But we say space (without the) when we mean ‘space in the universe’.

Compare:

There are millions of stars in space. (not in the space)

I tried to park my car, but the space was too small.

b) We use 'the' before 'same' (the same):

Your pullover is the same colour as mine. (not 'is same colour')

"Are these keys the same?" "No, they're different."

c) (go to) the cinema, the theatre:

I go to cinema a lot, but I haven't been to the theatre for ages.

When we say the cinema / the theatre, we do not necessarily mean a specific cinema or theatre.

d) We usually say the radio, but television (without the):

Compare:

I listen to the radio a lot.

(But)

I watch television a lot.

We heard the news on the radio.

(But)

We watched the news on television.

N.B: The television means the television set:

Can you turn off the television, please?

e) The + adjective

We use the + adjective (without a noun) to talk about groups of people, especially.

The young The rich The sick The blind The injured

The old The poor The disabled The deaf The dead

The elderly The homeless The unemployed

f) The + nationality

You can use the + nationality adjectives that end in '-ch' or '-sh'

(the French / the English / the Spanish etc.) the meaning is 'the people of that country':

The French are famous for their food. (= the people of French)

The French / the English etc. are plural in meaning. We do not say

Note:

'a French / an English':

You have to say a Frenchman / an Englishman etc

g) We use 'the' with plural names of people and places:

the Taylors (the Taylor family), the Johnsons

h) Building with 'the':

Hotels /restaurants

the Sheraton Hotel, the Holiday Inn

Theatres/ cinemas

the Palace Theatre, the Odeon (cinema)

Museums/galleries

the Guggenheim Museum, the Hayward Gallery

Other building

the Empire State (Building), the white house, the Eiffel Tower

Note:

We often leave out noun:

The Sheraton (Hotel) the Palace (Theatre) the Guggenheim (museum)

Some names are only 'the + noun', for example:

The Acropolis, the Kremlin, the Pentagon

i) Name with 'of' usually have 'the':

For example:

The Bank of England The Museum of Modern Art

The Great Wall of China The Tower of London.

Note:

We say:

The University of Cambridge but Cambridge University (without the)

j) Many organization have names with 'the':

the European Union, the BBC (= British Broadcasting Corporation), the Red Cross

Definite Articles - Rules

- ▶ **Use the to talk about something specific**
 - ▶ *The umbrella next to the door is not mine.*
- ▶ **Use the when the speaker and listener are talking about the same specific item**
 - ▶ *William, don't forget to close the refrigerator.*
- ▶ **Use the for the second and all other references to the same noun**
 - ▶ *James and I bought a new computer last month. The computer let us access the Internet really quickly.*
- ▶ **Use the with the superlative form of an adjective (most or -est)**
 - ▶ *Diamonds are the most expensive jewelry.*
- ▶ **Use the for the names of countries that look plural or have the words united, union, republic or kingdom**
 - ▶ *the Philippines, the Netherlands, the United States, the Republic of Angola.*



Exercise

Fill in the gaps with the definite articles:

1. We went on a walk in ___ forest yesterday.
2. Where is ___ bathroom?
3. My father enjoyed ___ book you gave him.
4. ___ writer who wrote this book is famous.
5. ___ sun rose at 5:17 this morning.
6. ___ President will be speaking on TV tonight.
7. You are ___ tallest person in our class.
8. ___ French enjoy cheese.
9. This is a painting from ___ 1820's.
10. They are travelling in ___ Arctic.



Answer Key

1. the
2. the
3. the
4. The
5. The
6. The
7. the
8. The
9. the
10. the

Lesson 3 : No Article & Exceptions



• Proper nouns

No Article is used before proper nouns. So no article is used before ---

- i) names of people
- ii) names of continents/countries
- iii) names of states/cities/towns
- iv) names of days/months/festivals
- v) names of subjects of study

For example:

We live in Dhaka / Bangladesh.

We are learning English.

He is a student of law/science.

Note:

a) family relations

These are normally treated like proper nouns, so no article is used before father, daddy, dad, mother, mum, mummy, uncle, aunt.

Example: *Father/Daddy is at home. (not the father/daddy)*

b) names of seasons

Though names of seasons can be used with or without 'the', it is more common to drop the article.

Example: *Spring is in the air.*

• Uncountable nouns

No article is used before uncountable nouns (material and abstract nouns).

Example:

He sells milk.

She lacks confidence.

• Names of games/sports

No article is used before the names of games/sports:

Example:

We play cricket/tennis/football. (not, a cricket)

- **Public institutions**

No article is used before public institution like these: *church, court, hospital, market, temple, prison, school, college, university*

Example:

We go to church on Sundays. (not the church)

My child does not like to go to school. (not the school)

Old people must go to hospital for regular check-ups. (not the hospital)

Note:

But a noun like this takes ‘the’ when it refers to its building:

Example:

I went to the mosque to admire its architecture.

Compare:

- *The north (of Bangladesh)*

But

Northern Bangladesh (without ‘the’)

The north-east (of Spain)

But

South-eastern Spain

Sweden is in northern Europe; Spain is in the south.

- **We do not use ‘the’ with names of most city streets/roads/squares/parks etc.:**

<i>Wall Street (not the...)</i>	<i>Fifth Avenue</i>	<i>Hyde Park</i>
<i>Queens Road</i>	<i>Broadway</i>	<i>Times Square</i>

- **Names of important public buildings and institutions (for example, airports, stations, Universities) are often two words:**

<i>Manchester Airport</i>	<i>Harvard University</i>	
<i>Victoria station (not the ...)</i>	<i>Canterbury Cathedral</i>	<i>Edinburgh Castle</i>
<i>Buckingham Palace</i>	<i>Cambridge University</i>	<i>Sydney Harbour</i>

Note:

Buckingham Palace (not the...)

But

the Royal palace

(‘Royal’ is an adjective – it is not a name like ‘Buckingham’.)

- **We do not use ‘the’ names of people (‘Helen’, ‘Helen Taylor’ etc.). In the same way, we do not normally use ‘the’ with names of places:**

For example:***Continents***

Africa, Europe, South America

Countries

France, Japan, Switzerland, Texas

Islands

Bermuda, Tasmania

Cities

Cairo, New York, Bangkok

Mountains

Everest, Etna, Kilimanjaro

- **Compare:**

<i>Ken’s brother is in prison for robbery.</i> (Note: He is a prisoner. We are not thinking of a specific prison.)	<i>Ken went to the prison to visit this brother.</i> (He went as a visitor, not as a prisoner.)
<i>Joe had an accident last week. He was taken to hospital now. (as a patient)</i>	<i>Jane has gone to the hospital to visit joe.</i> <i>She’s at the hospital now. (as a visitor)</i>
<i>When I leave school, I want to go to university/college.</i>	<i>Excuse me, where is the university, please?</i> (=the university buildings)
<i>Sally’s father goes to church every Sunday.</i> (to a religious service)	<i>Some workmen went to the church to repair the roof. (not for a religious service)</i>

With most other places, you need ‘the’.

For example:

the cinema, the bank.

• **Compare:**

<i>In general (without the)</i>	<i>Specific people or things (with the)</i>
<i>Children learn from playing.</i> (=children in general)	<i>We took the children to the zoo.</i> (=a specific group, perhaps the speaker's children)
<i>I couldn't live without music.</i>	<i>The film wasn't very good, but I liked the music.</i> (=the music in the film)
<i>All cars have wheels.</i>	<i>All the cars in this car park belong to people who work here.</i>
<i>Sugar isn't very good for you.</i>	<i>Can you pass the sugar, please?</i> (=the sugar on the table)
<i>English people drink a lot of tea.</i> (=English people in general)	<i>The English people I know drink a lot of tea.</i> (=only the English people I know, not English people in general.)
<i>I like working with people.</i> (=people in general)	<i>I like the people I work with.</i> (=a specific group of people)
<i>Do you like coffee?</i> (=coffee in general)	<i>Did you like the coffee we had after dinner last night?</i> (=specific coffee)

• **Compare 'a' and 'the':**

a) *I'd like to have a piano.*

But

I can't play the piano.

b) *We saw a giraffe at the zoo.*

But

The giraffe is my favourite animal.

Note:

We use man (= human beings in general/the human race) without 'the':

What do you know about the origins of man? (not the man)

c) It was a four-week course.

But

The course lasted four weeks.

- **Plural indefinite nouns**

No article is used before plural nouns that are indefinite:

Bees gather honey.

Dogs bark at night.

I love birds and animals.

Note:

The is used before a plural noun only when it is made definite by a preposition or a relative clause:

Example:

The apples that are on the tree are ripe.

The soldiers of this battalion are well-trained.

But

Apples are costly. (not, the apples)

- **Nouns as object complements**

No article is used before a noun acting as a complement to the direct object:

Example:

They crowned him king. (not, a king)

The article is omitted when the object complement (king) indicates a unique status of the direct object (him).

They appointed him professor. (not a professor)

We elected him chairman. (not a chairman)

(**N.B:** ‘complement’ is a word or phrase added to a verb to complete the predicate in a sentence.)

- **Names of meals/articles of food**

No article is used before names of meals/articles of food:

Example:

I have breakfast at 8' clock. (Not, a breakfast)

I usually have lunch at 2 p.m. (not, a lunch)

I had just finished dinner when the call came.

There is brinjal on the menu today. (not, the brinjal)

Note:

When the name of a meal or article of food is modified by an adjective phrase or relative clause, an article must be used to make it specific.

Example:

I had a good breakfast this morning.

There is a dinner tonight in honour of the new director.

The bread/fish you are eating is not fresh.

Repetition of articles

When two or more nouns joined by and refer to the same person or thing, an article is used before the first noun only:

He is a great poet and thinker. (not, a thinker)

The District Magistrate and Collector is on tour (not, the Collector).

But when they refer to different/separate people or things, an article is used before each of them:

Both the boy and the girl have done well in their examinations.

The Prime Minister and the Education Minister are reaching tomorrow.

Note:

When two or more adjectives modify the same noun, an article is used before the first adjective only.

I have a red and blue pencil.

(only one pencil that is partly red and partly blue)

But when adjectives modify different nouns, an article is used before each of them:

I have a red and a blue pencil.

(two pencils-one is red and the other blue)



Exercise

Fill the gaps with appropriate articles:

1. ___ Mexican food is spicy
2. I have read ___ Romeo and Juliet.
3. I don't eat ___ cheese.
4. Thanks for ___ help you gave me yesterday.
5. Where's ___ pencil I lent you yesterday?
6. Can I borrow ___ red pencil, please?

7. I don't like ____ small, noisy children.
8. I don't eat ____ German cheese.
9. He goes to ____ school.
10. I live in ____ Dhaka.

Answer Key

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