

# 18

## GRAMMAR

### Articles

#### Indefinite article (*a / an*)

- With something we refer to for the first time.  
*I've just had **a great idea**. I'll give you **a call** next week.*
- With one of a group of things.  
*Shall we choose **a book** from this catalogue?*
- Where we use an adjective to describe a noun.  
*Cairo is **a very big city**. It's **a beautiful day**.*
- With someone's job.  
*Peter is **a truck driver**.*
- With singular fractions, group numbers and large numbers.  
*one and **a half** kilos   **a dozen** eggs   **a hundred** envelopes*
- Meaning *per*.  
*He was doing ninety miles **an hour**.*  
*Julie earns £500 **a week**.*

#### Definite article (*the*)

- With nouns we have mentioned previously.  
*There is **a bedroom** and **a living room**. **The bedroom** is quite large.*
- With nouns we mention for the first time, but where it is clear which person or thing we are talking about.  
*Can you pass **the marmalade**?*  
*My life changed completely after **the war**.*
- Where there is only one of something. It is clear which one we are talking about.  
***The moon** is full tonight.*
- With nouns followed by a descriptive phrase, which makes them definite.  
*This is **the man I told you about**.*  
See also the examples in brackets in the next section, paragraphs 4 and 7.  
This category includes proper names with a descriptive phrase. Compare with the next section, paragraph 2:  
*London Bridge (BUT **the Tower of London**)*
- With national groups.  
***The British** drink far too much tea.*
- With classes of people.  
***The rich** get richer and **the poor** get poorer.*



- With individual items which represent a class.  
*The lion is fast disappearing.*
- With names of musical instruments that we can play.  
*I can't play **the piano** but I can play **the guitar**.*
- With some geographical names. In particular: oceans, seas, rivers, canals and regions.  
*The Thames flows into **the North Sea**. **the Arctic***  
Also with plural countries, or where the country name contains a noun.  
***the Netherlands** **the People's Republic of China***
- With superlatives, ordinals, *the same*, *the only*.  
*This is **the best**. You are **the first**. This is **the only one**.*
- With media.  
*What's on **(the) television**? I went to **the cinema**.*

### Zero article (no article)

- With uncountable nouns and plural countable nouns when we are talking generally.  
*Give **peace** a chance. Football is **life**.*  
*I hate **wasps**. All he talks about is **cars**.*
- With most continents, countries, states, islands, mountains, lakes, cities, parks, roads and streets, squares, bridges, palaces, castles, cathedrals, stations and airports.  
*We live in **France**. We took the train from **Paddington Station to Bath**.*  
But see previous section, paragraph 9, for geographical names that use the definite article.
- With company names, years, months, days and special times of the year.  
*She works for **Lufthansa**. I'll see you in **January**.*
- With names of meals when we are talking generally.  
*It's time for **lunch**. (BUT **The lunch** I had at Café Sol was good value.)*  
*What's for **dinner**? (BUT **The dinner** Sue gave us last night was delicious.)*
- With unique jobs or roles (the definite article is also possible in these cases).  
*Jim is **(the) chairman** of the company.*
- With prepositions of place with certain buildings, where the purpose of the building is more important than the place itself.  
*Sally is in **prison**. (she's a prisoner)*  
*Sally is in **the prison**. (she's a visitor to that specific building)*  
Similar are: *bed, church, class, court, hospital, school, university*
- With means of transport when we are talking generally.  
*We went there by **car**. (BUT We went there in **the car** that Alex borrowed.)*  
Note that if we use *in* or *on*, we need an indefinite article.  
*We went there in a car / on a bus.*



## FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### 1 Put *a / an* or *the* in each space, or leave the space blank.

- 1 We went by ..... train to ....the..... west of England.
- 2 ..... people who live in ..... Netherlands are called ..... Dutch.
- 3 ..... judge sent me to ..... prison for ..... ten years.
- 4 ..... Columbus was one of ..... first people to cross ..... Atlantic.
- 5 As ..... captain of ..... ship, I have ..... complete authority.
- 6 David learned to play ..... violin when he was at ..... university.
- 7 ..... Trafalgar Square is near ..... Charing Cross Station.
- 8 Did you read ..... book I lent you ..... last week?
- 9 We'll put up ..... shelves and then go to ..... café for ..... something to eat.
- 10 Is that ..... present Bill gave you for ..... Christmas?

### 2 Underline the most suitable phrase in each sentence.

- 1 Is this *a person* / *the person* you told me about?
- 2 This is *the only cinema* / *an only cinema* in the area.
- 3 Philip has just bought *the Thames barge* / *a Thames barge*.
- 4 I'm going to *the British Museum* / *British Museum* this afternoon.
- 5 Are you going to *church* / *the church* on Sunday?
- 6 Do you have *a milk jug* / *milk jug*?
- 7 *The prime minister* / *Prime minister* will give a speech this afternoon.
- 8 *The computer* / *Computer* has already changed our lives dramatically.
- 9 I haven't been to *an open-air theatre* / *open-air theatre* before.
- 10 Here is *a thousand pounds* / *the thousand pounds* I owe you.





**3 Complete each sentence with the most suitable word or phrase.**

- 1 The butler was .....C..... I suspected.  
A last person    B a last person    C the last person    D some last person
- 2 Where ..... you borrowed last week?  
A is scissors    B are the scissors    C is some scissors    D are scissors
- 3 Why don't we go to the park ..... ?  
A in the car    B with a car    C with car    D by the car
- 4 Too much rubbish is being dumped in .....  
A sea    B the sea    C a sea    D some sea
- 5 This is exactly ..... I was looking for.  
A job    B a job    C some job    D the job
- 6 Of all these cars, I think I prefer .....  
A a Japanese    B some Japanese    C the Japanese one    D a Japanese one
- 7 I try to go jogging at least four times .....  
A the week    B of the week    C a week    D of a week
- 8 Sally spent six months out of .....  
A work    B a work    C the work    D some work

**4 Complete each sentence (1–9) with a suitable ending (a–i). More than one answer may be possible.**

- 1 Some people say that the .....h.....
  - 2 Most people think that a / an .....
  - 3 I don't agree that .....
  - 4 I feel that a .....
  - 5 I don't believe that a / an .....
  - 6 I didn't realize that the .....
  - 7 It's incredible to think that a / an .....
  - 8 I didn't know that .....
  - 9 I think it's quite unfair that the .....
- a good job is an important part of life.
  - b single injection can protect you from so many diseases.
  - c hundred miles an hour is too fast even on a motorway.
  - d the unemployed should receive more help from the state.
  - e head of this company doesn't pay any income tax.
  - f tiger may well become extinct very soon.
  - g third of a person's income should be paid in tax.
  - h English are difficult to get to know at first.
  - i the Tower of London was built by William the Conqueror.



## FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### 5 Put *a* / *an* or *the* in each space, or leave the space blank.

- 1 Neil Armstrong made .....~~the~~..... first footprint on .....~~the~~..... Moon.
- 2 There was ..... accident yesterday at ..... corner of ..... street.
- 3 I need ..... time to think about ..... offer you made me.
- 4 ..... recipe for ..... success is ..... hard work.
- 5 ..... people who live in ..... glass houses shouldn't throw ..... stones.
- 6 ..... worst part of ..... living in a caravan is ..... lack of space.
- 7 ..... book you ordered ..... last week is now in ..... stock.
- 8 ..... dancing is ..... more interesting activity than ..... reading.
- 9 ..... people we met on ..... holiday in ..... north of England sent us ..... postcard.
- 10 ..... little knowledge is ..... dangerous thing.

### 6 Each sentence has one error. Either cross out an unnecessary article, or write the missing article at the end of the line.

- 1 Let's go on holiday to ~~the~~ Greek Islands. .... the .....
- 2 I'd like one and half kilos of mince, please. ....
- 3 I saw that film on DVD, not at cinema. ....
- 4 Some people believe that the love is the best thing in the world. ....
- 5 I'm not afraid of many things, but I really hate the spiders. ....
- 6 Jim is in the bed with a bad cold. ....
- 7 We spent lovely day in the mountains. ....
- 8 Harry once crossed Atlantic on an old passenger ship. ....
- 9 The train travels at over 200 kilometres hour. ....
- 10 We went to England on a train through Channel Tunnel. ....



7 Put *a / an* or *the* in each space, or leave the space blank.

- 1 There is one problem here, and that's the weather.  
**only**  
 The only problem here is ..... the weather.
- 2 There are no good films on this week.  
**cinema**  
 There is nothing ..... this week.
- 3 Can't you swim faster than that?  
**fastest**  
 Is ..... can swim?
- 4 I haven't been here before.  
**time**  
 This is ..... been here.
- 5 A lot of wine is drunk in France.  
**French**  
 The ..... a lot of wine.
- 6 If you drive faster, it is more dangerous.  
**the**  
 The ..... dangerous it is.
- 7 It is difficult to discover what is true.  
**truth**  
 The ..... discover.
- 8 Are you a good pianist?  
**piano**  
 Can you ..... well?

8 Underline the most suitable phrase in each sentence.

- 1 I was under *an impression* / *the impression* that you had left.
- 2 I have to go. I'm *in a hurry* / *in hurry*.
- 3 I managed to sell the old painting *at a profit* / *at profit*.
- 4 I think I prefer the other restaurant *on the whole* / *on whole*.
- 5 How many hours do you work, *on average* / *on the average*, every week?
- 6 I was *in pain* / *in a pain* after I twisted my ankle.
- 7 Jack recovered from his accident and is now *out of danger* / *out of the danger*.
- 8 Excuse me, but you're *in the way* / *in a way*.
- 9 Sue felt seasick on the *cross-channel ferry* / *a cross the channel ferry*.
- 10 The burglar hit me *on my back of the neck* / *the back of my neck*.



## FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### 9 Put *a / an* or *the* in each space, or leave the space blank.

- 1 What's the use in taking ..... medicine for ..... cold?
- 2 Is ..... happiness of ..... majority more important than ..... rights of ..... individual?
- 3 It's ..... long way by ..... train to ..... north of ..... Scotland.
- 4 ..... philosophers seem to think that ..... life is ..... mystery.
- 5 ..... most cars start badly on ..... cold mornings.
- 6 There was ..... time when I enjoyed ..... skating.
- 7 Do you have ..... reason for ..... arriving late?
- 8 When I arrive ..... home I feel ..... sense of ..... relief.
- 9 ..... end of ..... book is ..... by far ..... best part.
- 10 ..... friend always tells me ..... answers to ..... homework we have.

### Key points

- 1 With some types of building, the meaning can change depending on the use of the article.

*Helen is **at** school.* (the purpose of the school is important – Helen is a student or a teacher)

*Helen is **at the** school.* (the building itself is important – it is the place where we can find Helen)

- 2 The use of the article can show something about the context of a short piece of text. In particular, whether an item has or has not been mentioned before.

*The BBC reported that **the** two men have since been recaptured.*

Use of *the* shows that the two men have been mentioned before, and so this is an extract from a longer text.

- 3 Many uses of articles are idiomatic, and should be learned as part of a phrase.

*Diana works as a graphic designer.*

### → SEE ALSO

**Grammar 17:** Countable and uncountable nouns

**Grammar 19:** *All, no, none, each, every, either, neither*