

34 Articles 1

Is a shark responsible for cutting Internet access to millions of people across China? It's one possible explanation for how a \$1.4 billion cable linking China to the western U.S. was cut. Another possibility is that a fisherman may have cut the cable by mistake.

(Yahoo Business News website)

A Articles

- *A/an* is called the indefinite article, and we use it to introduce new information.
The is called the definite article, and we use it when the listener knows which person or thing we are talking about.
'No article' is the noun by itself, without an article. We use no article when we want to speak generally.
- Compare:
*I read **an** interesting report last week.* ('report' is mentioned for the first time)
*Have you read **the** report I gave you?* (the listener knows which report)
***Reports** are sent out four times a year.* (speaking generally)

B A/an

- We use *a/an* to introduce new information. The listener does not know which person or thing we are talking about.
- We use *a/an* to refer to something for the first time.
*We must have a **meeting** next week.*
*I have **an** idea I'd like to discuss.*
- We use *a/an* to refer to one of a group of things.
*Can you pass me **a** paper clip from that box by your side?*
- We use *a/an* to describe someone's job, but not areas of business.
*Fiona used to be **a** teacher, but now she's in management training.*
- We use *a/an* to describe something.
*It's **an** interesting idea. Cairo is **a** very big city. This is **a** better product.*
- We use *a/an* in expressions of measurement. *Per* can also be used.
twice a/per month 3,000 units an/per hour We charge £100 an/per hour
- *A/an* mean 'one', so we cannot use *a/an* with plurals or uncountable nouns.
*Can you give me **some** information?* (NOT ~~an information~~)

C A or an?

- We use *a* in front of a consonant sound, and *an* in front of a vowel sound.
consonant sounds: *a manager, a job, a university, a one-way street, a European law*
vowel sounds: *an idea, an employer, an hour, an MBA*
- In a similar way, *the* is pronounced /ðə/ before a consonant sound and /ði:/ before a vowel sound.

D The

- We use *the* for old information. It is clear which person or thing we are talking about.
*Six banks are interested in buying a stake in Peru's Banco Latino. Three are North American banks, one is a major Spanish institution, another is Ecuadorean and the other is Peruvian. **The six** have been invited to study Latino's books and bid by the end of March.* (Business News Americas website)
- We often know which one because we mentioned it before, using *a/an*.
*We must have **a meeting** next week. **The meeting** should focus on the auditors' report. I went to **an** interesting **show** last week. It was **the Paris Spring Collection**.*
- Sometimes we know which one because it is clear from the situation, or it is shared knowledge from the lives of the speaker and listener.
*Where's **the newspaper**?* (we know which one from the situation)
***The meeting** will begin at ten.* (both the speaker and listener know which meeting)
Note that in this case we can use *the* to refer to something for the first time.
- We use *the* when there is only one of something. It is clear which one we are talking about.
*I'll speak to **the boss** when he gets back.*
- We use *the* with nationalities and other groups.
*I really admire **the Italians** for their sense of design.*
*The government is trying to do more to help **the poor**.*

unit 37 ● We use *the* with superlatives.

*This is **the best** quality material we have in stock.*

E No article

- No article is used when we are talking generally.
*The first issue of the Agency Magazine features an article called '**Health and safety at work – A question of costs and benefits?**'. (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work website)*
- **PLURAL NOUNS**
Compare:
*I sent **the emails** this morning.* (we know which emails)
*I usually reply to **emails** within 24 hours.* (emails in general)
- **UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS**
Compare:
***The information** in this report gives us **the power** to target our advertising.* (we know which information and power)
***Information** is **power**.* (information and power in general)
***The insurance business** is doing well.* (we know which business)
***Business** is going well at the moment.* (business in general)
***The negotiating** was a lot easier last time.* (we know which negotiating)
***Negotiating** with suppliers takes a lot of time.* (negotiating in general)
- A common mistake is to use *the* with plural nouns and uncountable nouns used in a general way.
Small companies often grow faster. (NOT ~~The small companies~~)
For me, football is like life. (NOT For me, ~~the football is like the life.~~)

unit 35 ● We use no article for most companies, countries, states and cities.

*I work for **HBSC** in **Hong Kong**.*

***Los Angeles** is in **California**.*

A Place names and no article

- In general, no article is used for continents, countries, states, islands, mountains, lakes, cities, parks, roads, streets, squares, palaces, castles, cathedrals, stations and airports.
Europe/Asia France/China California/Lazio Crete/Madeira
Mont Blanc/Mount Everest Lake Lucerne/Lake Michigan Tokyo/Budapest
Central Park/Hyde Park Fifth Avenue/Church Street Trafalgar Square/Times Square
Buckingham Palace Windsor Castle Milan Cathedral Grand Central Station Orly Airport

B Place names and the

- Note that all the following use *the*:
 - Plurals: *the Alps, the Bahamas, the Netherlands*
 - Adjective + place: *the Red Sea, the Middle East, the West End*
(But NOT if the place is the name of a country or continent: *France, South-East Asia*)
 - Phrases with 'of': *the Houses of Parliament, the South of France*
 - Political constitutions: *the Irish Republic, the United Kingdom (the UK), the US*
 - Rivers and canals: *the Amazon, the Loire, the Suez Canal*
 - Oceans and seas: *the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean*
 - Roads with numbers: *the M6 (motorway), the A1*
 - Theatres and galleries: *the Globe (Theatre), the Uffizi (Gallery)*
 - Hotels: *the Marriott (Hotel)*
 - Famous buildings: *the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, the White House*

C Special uses of the

- We use *the* with:
 - International institutions: ***The United Nations, The World Bank, The IMF***
 - Adjectives to refer to a group: ***The unemployed*** do not receive enough help.
 - the ... of a/the ... : ***the end of an era, the start of the project***
 - Some time phrases: ***in the past, at the moment, in the future*** (but at present),
the 1960s (decades), ***the 21st century*** (centuries)
 - Points of the compass: ***in the north/east/south/west, in the south-west***
 - Playing instruments: ***I play the piano/guitar.***
 - Job titles and official titles: ***The Marketing Director, the Prime Minister*** said ...
(But NOT title + name: *Prime Minister Tony Blair* said ...)
 - City Snapshots: a monthly guide for the business traveler.* (asia-inc magazine website)
 - Hypo Alpe-Adria-Bank*** has been highly successful in ***Croatia*** over the past four years. According to ***Dr. Wolfgang Kulterer, the Chairman of the Board***, this success is due to concentrating business activities on ***the Alpine-Adriatic market*** and choosing good business partners. (cebd website)

D Special uses of 'no article'

- We use no article with:
 - Company names: *I work for **Accenture**.*
 - Years, months, days: *in **2001**, in **July**, on **Thursday***
 - Special times of the year: *at **Christmas/Easter***
 - Some parts of the day: *at **night/midnight/sunset** (BUT *the morning, the afternoon*)*
 - Means of transport (in general): *by **car/taxi/train/bus**, on **foot** (BUT *on the train to Rome*)*
 - Meals (in general): ***Dinner** is at 7.30. (BUT *There was a dinner at the conference*)*

- Note the use of 'preposition + no article' with certain buildings, when the purpose of the building is more important than the place itself. Compare:
 - I spent two days **in hospital**.* (the speaker is not interested in which one)
 - My company supplies equipment for **the hospital**.* (one specific hospital)

Other words of this type which use 'preposition and no article' are:

 - in/to** hospital/prison/bed/class/court
 - at/to** work/school/university/sea/home

Note how we use 'home':

 - be at home, go home (NOT ~~go to home~~)*

E General and specific meanings

- When we use a plural noun or an uncountable noun on its own it has a general meaning. When we put *the* in front it has a specific meaning.

<p>Cars are much safer these days.</p> <p>I don't understand spreadsheets.</p> <p>People can be difficult.</p> <p>I prefer fish to meat.</p> <p>Money makes the world go round.</p> <p>How's business?</p>	<p>The cars we make are built to last.</p> <p>The spreadsheets for March and April are here.</p> <p>The people in my office are all very friendly.</p> <p>The fish I had for lunch was superb.</p> <p>Have you got the money I gave you?</p> <p>The clothing business is very competitive.</p>
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Taxis in Singapore are abundant and reasonably priced, but hard to find during rush hours, when it rains and between 11 pm and midnight. **The taxis** from the airport to the central business district cost around \$12. (asia-inc magazine website)



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