



UNIT 16.

ZERO (∅) ARTICLE, INDEFINITE ARTICLE A/AN, DEFINITE ARTICLE THE

Adapted from:

- Murphy, R. (2004). *English Grammar in Use with Answers. A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Students of English.* (3rd revised edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swan, M. (2005). *Practical English Usage.* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Vince, M. (2009). *First Certificate Language Practice: English Grammar and Vocabulary. With Key* (4th ed.). Oxford: MacMillan



1. ZERO (∅) ARTICLE

a) Uncountable nouns

I love gazpacho.

b) Abstract or general ideas

Give love a chance.

c) Plural nouns not previously mentioned:

I hate buses.



1. ZERO (∅) ARTICLE

d) Most proper names (in singular):

- *We live in Spain.*
- *I'll see you in February.*

e) Names of sports, meals and school subjects:

- *I play tennis.*
- *I really enjoyed Latin at high school.*
- *What's for dinner?*

BUT:

- *The dinner that they offered was superb.*
- *A superb dinner*



1. ZERO (∅) ARTICLE

f) Prepositions of place (when the place plays a special role):

Helen is in prison.

Helen is in the prison.

(church, school, university, work, hospital)

What's the difference between?:

Mary is in hospital.

Mary is at the hospital.

Go to work/be at work/start work/finish work

Go home/come home/arrive home/be at home



1. ZERO (∅) ARTICLE

g) General means of transport

We went there by taxi/car/bus/train/plane/by sea/air/road.

We went there on a bus/in a car.

h) Next or last

week/weekend/month/year/summer/Monday:

See you next Monday.

I have loads of work to do next weekend.

i) Gerunds

Horse racing is more popular in England than fox-hunting.



2. INDEFINITE ARTICLE

A) Describing jobs

*My sister is **a** dentist.*

B) Singular fractions, group numbers and large numbers

*One and **a** half kilos*

***A** dozen eggs*

***A** hundred envelopes*

C) Meaning “per”

*She was doing ten times **a**n hour.*

*She earns 2,000 euros **a** month.*



3. A/AN and THE

- *Neil is looking for **a** job.*
- *Did Neil get **the** job he applied for?*

We use *the* to talk about specific people, places, or things:

- *He works in **the** city centre.*
- *My brother is in **the** army.*
- *I took a cab to **the** airport.*
- *I hate going to **the** dentist.*



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

A) Previously mentioned items

*There are **a** blackboard and **a** table. **The** blackboard is not very big.*

B) Single items, whose reference is clear

- *Can you open **the** window, please?*
- *Dad must go to **the** bank to get some money and then he's going to **the** post office to buy some stamps.*



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

C) Unique objects

The Earth goes round the sun.

London is the capital of the United Kingdom.

But:

The Earth is a planet.

(there are more planets besides the Earth)



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

D) Individual items which represent a class
(the + singular noun = plural noun)

- *The kangaroo is found in Australia.*
- *Kangaroos are found in Australia.*

E) Classes of people

- *The unemployed need more help from the government.*
- *The rich, the poor, the elderly, the dead.*

F) Play + *the* + musical instrument

- *Can you play the piano?*

BUT:

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



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

G) National groups (*The* +nationality)

Can we say?:

The Frenches are famous for their food.



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

G) National groups (*The* + nationality)

Can we say?:

****The Frenches are famous for their food.***

- ***The French are famous for their food.***
- ***French people are famous for their food.***

(the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, the Irish, the Welsh, the Chinese)

Can we say?:

- ***The French who sold me a villa in the Loire Valley was very rich.***
- ***The Italian who sold me a villa in the Loire Valley was very rich.***



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

G) National groups (*The* + nationality)

Can we say?:

****The Frenches are famous for their food.***

- ***The French are famous for their food.***
- ***French people are famous for their food.***

(the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, the Irish, the Welsh, the Chinese)

Can we say?:

- **** The French who sold me a villa in the Loire Valley was very rich.***
- ***The Frenchman who sold me a villa in the Loire Valley was very rich.***
(Frenchman/woman, Dutchman/woman, Britishman/woman, Irishman/woman, Welshman/woman, Spanishman/woman, Chineseman/woman)
- ***The Italian who sold me a villa in the Loire Valley was very rich.***
(An Italian/Italians, a Mexican/Mexicans, a Scot/Scots, a Turk/Turks, a Spaniard/Spaniards)



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

H) Some topographical names:

Plural names of places:

- The Netherlands*
- The United States of America*
- The Twin Towers*

Singular names of places where the name contains a *noun* or *of + noun*

- The Dominican Republic*
- The United Kingdom*
- The Middle East*
- The Tower of London*
- The Bank of England*

Names of rivers, oceans, regions, mountain ranges, groups of islands:

- The Thames*
- The Mediterranean Sea*
- The Canary Islands* (or *the Canaries*)
- The Alps*



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

I) Superlatives, ordinals, the same, the only:

- *You're simply **the** best.*
- *It's **the** same ingredient.*
- *You're **the** only one.*



4. DEFINITE ARTICLE *THE*

J) Media:

- *I went to **the** cinema/**the** theatre.*
- *What's on **the** radio?*

BUT:

- *What's on television?*



INDEED!:

**Swan, M. (2005). *Practical English Usage*. Oxford:
Oxford University Press.**

**If the rules for the use of articles seem too complicated, remember
these three golden rules:**

- **1. Do not use *the* (with plural and uncountable nouns) to talk
about things in general:**
Life is hard.
- **2. Do not use singular countable nouns without articles:**
The car a car
- **3. Use *a/an* to say what people's professions or jobs are:**
She's a bank manager