

A / An – The

- **A / An** is used only with singular countable nouns to talk about things in general. We don't use **a / an** with uncountable or plural nouns. We can use **some** instead. **A / An** is often used after the verbs **be** and **have**. *A dog is a domestic animal.* (Which dog? Dogs in general.) *Bring me some milk, please!*
- We can use **a / an** or **the** before a singular countable noun to refer to a class of people, animals or things. However, we omit **a / an** or **the** before a noun in the plural when it represents a class. *A / The dolphin is a mammal.* Also: *Dolphins are mammals.* Exception: *Man is a mammal, too.* (NOT: ~~The man~~)
- **The** is used with singular and plural nouns, countable and uncountable ones, to talk about something specific or when the noun is mentioned for a second time.
Whose is the van parked in front of our house? (Which van? The one parked in front of our house.)
He found a cat in the park. He took the cat home. (The word 'cat' is mentioned for a second time.)
- **The** is also used with the words **beach, cinema, country(side), ground, jungle, radio, sea, seaside, theatre, world, etc.** *He likes going to the theatre.* We usually say **television** without **the**. *We often watch television.* but: *Turn on the television (set).* We also say: *He lives near the sea.* but: *They are at sea* (= they are sailing). We normally omit **the** before the words **last** and **next** when we talk about a period of time immediately before or after the moment of speaking. *He graduated last year. I'll meet you next week. I went to the gym on Saturday but the next day I stayed at home.*

The is used before:

- nouns which are unique. *the Earth, the Eiffel Tower*
- names of cinemas (*the Rex*), hotels (*the Sheraton*), theatres (*the Apollo*), museums (*the Prado*), newspapers / magazines (*The Guardian*, but: (*Newsweek, Time Magazine*), ships (*the Marie Celeste*), institutions (*the RSPCA*), galleries (*the Tate Gallery*).
- names of rivers (*the Seine*), seas (*the Black Sea*), groups of islands / states (*the Bahamas, the USA*), mountain ranges (*the Alps*), deserts (*the Sahara desert*), oceans (*the Atlantic*) and names or nouns with **of** (*the Tower of London, the Statue of Liberty*).
Note: *the North / South Pole, the north of England, the South / West / North / East*
- musical instruments, dances. *the piano, the tango*
- names of families (*the Browns*), nationalities ending in **-sh, -ch** or **-ese** (*the English, the Dutch, the Japanese*). Other plural nationalities are used with or without **the** (*the Greeks, the Italians, etc.*).
- titles (*the Queen, the Prince*). **The** is omitted before titles with proper names (*Queen Victoria*).
- the superlative degree of adjectives / adverbs. *She's the tallest girl in her class.*
- the words **station, shop, cinema, library, city, village, etc.** *She went to the station to see Jim off.*
- **morning, afternoon, evening, night.** *I'll be at home in the evening.* but: *at night, at noon, at midnight, by day / night, at 4 o'clock, etc.*

The is omitted before:

- proper nouns. *Jim comes from New York.*
- names of sports, games, activities, days, months, holidays, colours, meals and languages (not followed by the word **language**). *She plays squash well. She likes red. We speak English.* but: *The English language is spoken all over the world.*
- names of countries (*Italy*), cities (*Rome*), streets (*Oxford Street*, but: *the High Street*), parks (*Hyde Park*), stations (*Victoria Station*), mountains (*Everest*), islands (*Cyprus*), lakes (*Lake Michigan*), continents (*Europe*) but: *the Argentine, the Netherlands, (the) Sudan, the Hague, the Vatican.*
- possessive adjectives. *This isn't your bag.*
- **bed, church, college, court, hospital, prison, school, university,** when we refer to the purpose for which they exist. *Tom goes to school.* (He is a student.) but: *His mother went to the school yesterday to get his report.* (She went to the school as a visitor.)
Note: **work** (place of work) never takes **the**. *She's at work.*
- the words **home, father / mother** when we talk about our own home / parents. *Mother is at home.*
- means of transport: **by bus / by car / by train / by plane, etc.** but: *in the car, on the bus / train, etc.* *She travelled by plane.* but: *She left on the 6 o'clock plane yesterday.*
- illnesses. *He's got malaria.* But we say: **flu / the flu, measles / the measles, mumps / the mumps**