

## ● Articles / countable and uncountable nouns / quantifiers

### Indefinite article

There are two indefinite articles in English: 'a' and 'an'. 'An' is used before vowel sounds.

Use	Example
Singular countable nouns (when we are not being specific or when we mention something for the first time)	There's <b>a</b> good film on TV tonight.

**Watch out!**

- Whether we use 'an' or 'a' depends on the sound, **not** the spelling.
  - ✓ *The news is on TV in **an** hour.*
  - ✗ *The news is on TV in **a** hour.*
  - ✓ *Being in a film was **a** unique experience for me.*
  - ✗ *Being in a film was **an** unique experience for me.*

### Definite article

There is one definite article in English: 'the'.

Use	Example
Singular countable nouns (when we are being specific)	Where's <b>the</b> DVD you were talking about?
Singular countable nouns (when we are talking generally)	<b>The</b> radio seemed amazing to people at first.
Plural countable nouns (when we are being specific)	I didn't believe <b>the</b> rumours about the prime minister.
Uncountable nouns (when we are being specific)	I followed <b>the</b> advice my lawyer gave me.

**Watch out!**

- The way we say 'the' changes depending on the sound at the start of the next word. Before a consonant sound (*the media, the USA, the programme*), we pronounce it /ðə/. Before a vowel sound (*the announcer, the actor, the editor*), we pronounce it /ði/.
- We often use 'the' when we are talking about something there is only one of.
  - ✓ **the** sky, **the** sun, **the** moon, **the** Prince of Wales, **the** North Pole, **the** World Cup

### Zero article

We often don't use an article at all. This is sometimes called the zero article.

Use	Example
Plural countable nouns (when we are talking generally)	Journalists often face dangerous situations.
Uncountable nouns (when we are talking generally)	News travels fast these days.

### Articles in phrases and expressions

Notice how we use articles in the following phrases and expressions. Many of these are examples of general categories. For example, '**the** River Thames' means that we use 'the' for all rivers.

Use	Example
Time	definite article: in <b>the</b> 1990s, in <b>(the)</b> summer, in <b>the</b> morning zero article: in 2008, in June, on Friday, at night
People and work	indefinite article: have <b>a</b> job, work as <b>a</b> ... definite article: <b>the</b> queen, <b>the</b> principal, <b>the</b> president, <b>the</b> French zero article: become president, go to work, be at work, have work to do, he's French.
Places	definite article: <b>the</b> Alps, <b>the</b> Atlantic Ocean, <b>the</b> River Thames, <b>the</b> Earth, <b>the</b> Arctic, <b>the</b> USA, <b>the</b> UK, <b>the</b> Cyclades zero article: Mount Everest, Paris, America, Mars/Venus/Jupiter etc, Oxford Street, Lake Superior, Crete
Entertainment and sport	definite article: <b>the</b> media, on <b>the</b> radio, play <b>the</b> guitar, go to <b>the</b> cinema, watch <b>(the)</b> TV zero article: listen to music, on television, play tennis/football etc

Use	Example
Organisations	definite article: <b>the</b> army, <b>the</b> police, <b>the</b> fire brigade
Education	definite article: go to <b>the</b> school (as a visitor), be in <b>the</b> first year zero article: go to school (as a student), be in Class 3B, maths
Travel	indefinite article: take <b>a</b> taxi, catch <b>a/the</b> bus definite article: on <b>the</b> bus zero article: on foot, go home, go by bus
Health	indefinite article: have <b>a</b> cold/headache/cough definite article: have ( <b>the</b> ) flu/measles zero article: have toothache
Public buildings	definite article: <b>the</b> bank, <b>the</b> tax office, go to <b>the</b> hospital/prison (as a visitor) zero article: go to hospital/prison/church (as a patient/prisoner/worshipper)

**US vs UK Grammar**

- Speakers of American English do not usually use *hospital* without an article.  
**US:** The ambulance took Simon to **the** hospital.  
**UK:** The ambulance took Simon to hospital.

**Countable and uncountable nouns**

Type	Example
Countable nouns ● Use <i>a, the, some, many</i> ● Use a singular or plural verb	I want to be <b>a</b> journalist. Where is <b>the</b> newspaper? There are <b>some</b> good <b>articles</b> in the paper. How <b>many</b> <b>channels</b> do you get?
Uncountable nouns ● Use <i>the, some, much</i> ● Use a singular verb	Did you hear <b>the</b> news? <b>Some</b> important <b>news</b> has just come in. How <b>much</b> <b>information</b> do we have about it? Your <b>advice</b> was very useful.
Common uncountable nouns: <i>advice, coffee, furniture, glass, hair, homework, information, knowledge, luggage, money, news, paper, work</i>	

**Watch out!**

- Most uncountable nouns are singular, but a few are plural. These include *clothes, scissors, jeans, spectacles, trousers, groceries*, etc. With these words, we use a plural verb.  
✓ Oh, no! My new **clothes** **are** dirty!
- Some nouns are countable with one meaning and uncountable with another meaning.  
✓ Do you think you could bring me **a** clean **glass**? (countable)  
✓ We should make computer monitors out of recycled **glass**. (uncountable)

**Quantifiers**

Quantifier	Use	Example
many	● countable nouns, usually in negative statements and questions	There aren't <b>many</b> programmes on TV that I find interesting.
much	● uncountable nouns, usually in negative statements and questions	My dad never shows <b>much</b> interest in the news.
a lot of / lots of	● countable and uncountable nouns in positive statements	That film has won <b>a lot of / lots of</b> awards. What <b>a lot of</b> luggage you've got!
a few	● countable nouns, means 'some'	There have been <b>a few</b> scandals in the papers recently.
a little	● uncountable nouns, means 'some'	They say that <b>a little</b> knowledge is a dangerous thing.
few	● countable nouns, means 'not many'	Richard has <b>few</b> interests outside work.
little	● uncountable nouns, means 'not much'	The police have <b>little</b> information about the robbery.

**Watch out!**

- The phrase 'only a few' means 'not many'. The phrase 'only a little' means 'not much'.  
✓ There are **only a few** programmes on TV that I like watching.  
✓ There's **only a little** sugar left, so get some when you go out.