

28th October 2024
OET Writing – Articles

Starter

What are the missing words in these sentences?

1. I saw **a** woman and **a** man in the street. **The** woman was shouting at **the** man.
2. My brother is **a** doctor and he works six days **a** week.
3. I think men are very friendly in general, but **the** men in this office are very rude.
4. She's working at home today and afterwards we're going to **the** cinema together.
5. I went on holiday in August last year and I ate dinner outside every night at **the** hotel.

In English we have three articles...

- The indefinite article – **a/an**
- The definite article – **the**
- The zero article – **no article**

Let's look at how we use them...

an umbrella / a university / an honest man / half an hour

The Indefinite Article – a/an

...is only used before singular countable nouns

The first time you mention something:

There was **a** man and **a** dog

When we mention what something is or what someone does:

It's **an** awful restaurant!

She's **an** architect

In expressions of frequency:

I go to the gym three times **a** week

He has his eyes checked once **a** year

The Definite Article – the

...can be used before singular or plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns

When we refer to something we've already mentioned:

There was a man and a dog. **The** dog was barking at **the** man

When it's clear or obvious what you are referring to:

The students are in **the** classroom

Please wash up **the** plates

With unique things:

The Earth orbits around **the** Sun and **the** Moon orbits around **the** Earth

With some places in a town/city:

A: I'm going to **the** cinema tonight, do you want to come?

B: Sorry, I'm going to **the** pub with my friends

With superlatives:

The best restaurant in town is on Regent Street

It was **the** most difficult exam I've ever done

With some adjectives to describe a group of people:

A: **The** French are very good at making cheese

B: Really? I think **the** Italians are better

The government should do more to help **the** unemployed and **the** elderly

The Zero Article – no article

...used with singular or plural countable nouns or uncountable nouns

When we speak in general and use a plural countable noun or an uncountable noun:

Men are worse at communicating than women
People get angry when they don't have food and drink

I love pasta dishes (in general)
I love **the** pasta dishes that my friend cooks (specific pasta dishes)

When we use at/from/to with nouns such as home/work/bed:

I'm working at home today
What time do you get back from work?
I'm tired; I'm going to bed

Before meals/days/months:

I always have breakfast late on Sundays, especially in June

Dates are different...

We write: 21st March 2010 – 21/3/2010
We say: "**the** twenty-first **of** March 2010"

Seasons and times of day are different too:

I always have breakfast late on Sundays, especially in **the** summer
What time do you get up in **the** morning?
I finish at 5pm in **the** afternoon but I don't get home till 8pm at night

Before next/last + day/week/month/year:

See you next week!
Where were you last night?

Institutions

When we use nouns such as:

prison/school/hospital/university/church/mosque/synagogue/temple

We can use the indefinite article, the definite article or the zero article depending on the situation:

- I go to school every day (the institution is used for its normal purpose)
- I'm going to **the** school for an open day (the building, specific)
- They are building **a** new school on Princess Street (a building, unspecific)

Practice

Fill the spaces with a/an, the or nothing:

1. I saw ___ woman and ___ man in the street. ___ woman was shouting at ___ man.
2. My brother is ___ doctor and he works six days ___ week.
3. What ___ terrible idea! It's ___ worst idea I've ever heard.
4. I think ___ men are very friendly in general, but ___ men in this office are very rude.
5. She's working at ___ home today and afterwards we're going to ___ cinema together.
6. When he finishes ___ lunch, he goes to ___ fridge and eats more food.
7. ___ Earth revolves around ___ Sun once ___ year.
8. A: What are you doing ___ next week?
B: I'm going to ___ work by bus and then walking from ___ work to ___ gym.
9. I went on holiday in ___ August ___ last year and I ate ___ dinner outside every night at ___ hotel.
10. Please lock ___ door when you go to ___ church.

Differences:

I'm at ___ university studying Economics.

I'm going to ___ university for a meeting with the professor.

They're planning ___ new university in the centre of town.

I have ___ dinner every day at 6pm.

I really enjoyed ___ dinner you cooked yesterday