

**4<sup>th</sup> November 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**

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

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

## The Indefinite Article

...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

...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

...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 **a** boy and **a** girl in the street. **The** girl was laughing at **the** boy.
2. My brother is **a** teacher and he works five days **a** week.
3. What **a** terrible idea! It's **the** worst idea I've ever heard.
4. In general, I think teachers are difficult to understand, but **the** teachers in this school are very clear.
5. She's staying at home all day and then we're going to **the** theatre together.
6. When he finishes lunch, he goes to **the** fridge and eats more food.
7. **The** Earth revolves around **the** Sun once **a** year.
8. A: What are you doing next week?  
B: I'm going to work by bus and then walking from work to **the** gym.
9. I stayed with my sister in June last year and we had breakfast outside every morning on **the** terrace at the local café.
10. Please lock **the** door when you go to church.

### Differences:

I'm at university studying Economics.

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

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

I have dinner every day at 6pm.

I really enjoyed **the** dinner you cooked yesterday