

The Definite Article *The*

The definite article **the** is used with countable and uncountable nouns.

e.g. *the music, the woman, the trees*

The is used:

- ◆ with nouns when we are talking about something specific, that is, when the noun is mentioned for a second time or is already known. In other words, when we can answer the question 'Who?' or 'Which?'.
e.g. *I received a letter and a postcard on my birthday.*
The letter was from my parents and the postcard was from my friend.
- ◆ with nouns which are unique (*the sun, the moon, the Earth, etc.*).
- ◆ with the names of rivers (*the Nile*), seas (*the Black Sea*), oceans (*the Indian Ocean*), mountain ranges (*the Pyrenees*), deserts (*the Gobi*), groups of islands (*the Canary Islands*) and countries when they include words such as *state, kingdom, republic, etc.* (*the United States*).
- ◆ with the names of musical instruments (*the piano, the saxophone*) and dances (*the tango*).
- ◆ with the names of hotels (*the Sheraton Hotel*), theatres/cinemas (*the Odeon Theatre*), ships (*the Queen Mary*), organisations (*the UN*), newspapers (*The Times*) and museums (*the Louvre*).
- ◆ with nationality words (*the Belgians*) and names of families (*the Johnsons*).
- ◆ with titles when the name of the person is not mentioned (*the Duchess of Kent, the Queen*) **but:** *Queen Mary*.
- ◆ with the words *morning, afternoon* and *evening*.
e.g. *He goes home in the evening.*
- ◆ with the words *station, shop, cinema, pub, library, city, village, etc.*
e.g. *She went to the station to meet Jim.*
- ◆ with historical periods/events (*the Stone Age, the Middle Ages, the First World War*) **but:** *World War I*.
- ◆ with the words *only, last, first* (used as adjectives).
e.g. *He was the last person to arrive.*
- ◆ with adjectives/adverbs in the superlative form.
e.g. *She is the most intelligent woman I've ever met.*
Bob drives the most carefully of all.

The is not used:

- ◆ with uncountable and plural countable nouns when talking about something in general, that is, when we cannot answer the question 'Who?' or 'Which?'.
e.g. *Trees produce oxygen. (Which trees? Trees in general.)*
- ◆ with proper nouns. e.g. *This is Tom.*
- ◆ with the names of countries (*Egypt*), cities (*Rome*), streets (*Oxford Street*), parks (*Hyde Park*), mountains (*Mont Blanc*), railway stations (*Victoria Station*), bridges (*Tower Bridge*), individual islands (*Rhodes*), lakes (*Lake Ontario*) and continents (*Asia*).
- ◆ with the names of sports, games, activities, days, months, celebrations, colours, drinks, meals and languages (when they are not followed by the word 'language').
e.g. *I speak French. but: The French language is spoken in some parts of Canada.*
- ◆ with the words *this/that/these/those* (*this bag, those cars*) **NOT:** ~~the~~ *this bag*
- ◆ with possessive adjectives or the possessive case. e.g. *That isn't my car – it's Keith's.*
- ◆ with titles when the person's name is mentioned (*Prince Charles, President Reagan*).
- ◆ with two-word names when the first word is the name of a person or place (*Luton Airport*) **but:** *the White House*.
- ◆ with names of pubs, shops, banks and hotels named after the people who started them and end in *-s* or *'s*. *Harrods, Lloyds Bank, Emma's pub* **but:** *the Black Bull (pub)* (because 'Black' is not a name of a person or place)
- ◆ with the words *school, church, bed, hospital, college, university, court, prison* or *home* when we refer to the purpose for which they exist.
e.g. *Jack was in prison. (He was a prisoner.)*
Jack's mother went to the prison to see him. (She went to the prison as a visitor.)
- ◆ with the words *home, father/mother* when we talk about our own home/parents.
Father is at home.
- ◆ with means of transport: *by bus/car/train/plane, etc.* e.g. *She travelled by plane.*
- ◆ with the names of illnesses. e.g. *He's got malaria. but: flu/the flu, measles/the measles, mumps/the mumps*