

Using Articles #2 (the)

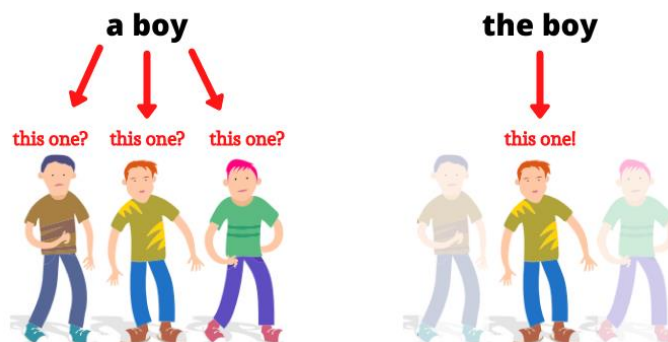
In the previous Tip Sheet (Using Articles #1) we looked at the rules for using **a** and **an**. In this Tip Sheet, we are looking at **the first 4 rules** for using **the**:

the

TOP TIP 1: We saw in the first Tip Sheet (Using Articles #1) that **a / an** means "one" and cannot be used with plurals (e.g. ~~a girls~~, ~~an eggs~~).

The, however, can be used with single items and plurals (e.g. The cup is over there. The cups need washing.)

TOP TIP 2: The name for **the** in grammar is "**The definite article**" That's because we use **the** to show or explain something definite.



Rule #1

The first time we talk about something, we use **a / an**. After that, we use **the**:

"I found a photograph of my grandmother yesterday. The photograph was in colour."

- If the person started with "The photograph was in colour" we would ask "Which photograph?" because we are not sure what they are talking about!



We use the same rule when we talk about something for the first time, and then talk about the thing in small detail:

"She bought a new car yesterday. The seats are leather."

- We understand the person is talking about the seats in the car."

"I went to a restaurant in Lincoln last night. The food was delicious."

- We know the person means the food at the restaurant.

Rule #2

When there is only one of something:

"The moon looks nice tonight."

"The sun will come out tomorrow."

Rule #3

When we understand immediately which one the speaker is talking about because we share the knowledge:

"The teacher gave us homework last week."

"The Queen is 94 years old."

[In the first sentence, we are students with the same teacher, so we both understand who the teacher is. In the second sentence, we both understand that here we mean Queen Elizabeth II.]

Rule #4

Always with a superlative (see our Tip Sheets on Superlatives if you're not sure about these):

"Usain Bolt is **the fastest** athlete in the world."

"Mount Everest is **the tallest** mountain."



Practice

Now see how well you know the rules. Choose either **a**, **an** or **the**:

1. I have ____ dog and ____ cat. ____ dog's name is Wolfy and ____ cat's name is Suki.
2. She lives in ____ really big house. ____ living room is bigger than my flat!
3. Can you pass me ____ bottle of ketchup, please?
4. I went to Lidl yesterday. ____ cashier was really nice and helped my with my English.
5. Is there ____ open jar of mayonnaise in ____ fridge?

ANSWERS
1. a / a / The / the 2. a / The 3. the 4. The 5. an / the

In the next Tip Sheet (Using Articles #3) we look at more rules on how to use "**the**" correctly.

Regards,

Ian