

# Introduction to Grammar – Parts of Speech

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Grammar is an area of English that strikes fear into the hearts of both students and teachers, but when viewed from a logical angle, it should not present too many difficulties. As native speakers of the English language this is something that we probably were not taught at school and despite using grammar perfectly in our natural, everyday speech, we often are unaware of what we are actually using or why we are using it!



Unless you spend your entire career teaching kindergarten and very young children, the odds are that sooner or later you are going to find yourself having to teach English grammar. This task is made much easier and stress free if you actually understand a bit yourself!!

No teacher is expected to be a walking grammar reference book and know absolutely everything, but if you do not know anything, you are likely to lose the confidence of your students. This course does not claim to provide complete coverage of the whole grammatical system, but does include all of the most commonly needed areas that you are likely to find yourself teaching in the years to come. For more complete grammar reference tools have a look at the suggested reading material from your introductory unit.

For the purpose of this course we assume a zero level of knowledge and build on that. If you already know a bit, then it will certainly make life easier and you may get through some of the grammar units more quickly.

**The simplest form of structure is the basic sentence.** A sentence must consist of at least a subject and verb but will usually feature more words than this. Each word in a sentence can be classified according to its purpose and the meaning it adds. This is what we refer to as parts of speech.

For example, a simple sentence such as ‘The black cat sat on the mat’, consists of a number of words, each of which plays a role in the sentence and can be classified as detailed below:

*The* – definite article

*black* – adjective

*cat* – noun

*sat* – verb

*on* – preposition

*the* – definite article

*mat* – noun

We can go into more detail if we wish (for example by stating that ‘sat’ is the past simple verb form).

This first grammar unit is primarily concerned with recognizing and classifying these parts of speech. Once you have read through the unit thoroughly, you should be ready to complete the worksheet.

Happy studying!

# 1 NOUNS

## Usage

A noun names people, places, things, qualities, states.

## Main Types

### ❖ Common

- log, person, chair (no capital letter)

### ❖ Proper

- Stephen, Italy, America  
(Always with a capital letter)

### ❖ Compound

- Post office, textbook, car park, bookcase, classroom, suitcase (two nouns joined to make new noun)

### ❖ Abstract

- Beauty, intelligence, democracy.  
(Something we experience as an idea, and cannot touch)

### ❖ Collective

- Family, flock, herd, jury, committee  
(Name of a group of individuals as if they were one)

## Plurals

Plurals are usually created by adding an *s*. If the noun ends in *ch*, *sh*, *x*, *s* we usually add *es*.  
For example: *cats*, *beds*, *watches*, *wishes*, *boxes*, *buses*.

A noun that ends in a consonant plus *y*, the *y* will usually change to an *i* then add *es*.  
For example: *family* – *families*.

A noun ending in an *f* will usually replace the *f* with a *v* and then add *es*.  
For example *thief* – *thieves*. Note that there are exceptions, such as *brief* – *briefs*.

## Exceptions

- ❖ *Tooth* – *Teeth*
- ❖ *Child* – *Children*
- ❖ *Man* – *Men*

These are just some of the common examples. There are other exceptions such as *sheep* where the noun doesn't change between singular and plural.

## Countable nouns

- ❖ Things that can be counted
- ❖ They can be preceded by articles *a/an/the*, and used in the plural
  - *a car, an egg, the table, the pigs*

## Uncountable nouns

- ❖ Things that cannot be counted
- ❖ They do not have *a* or *an* in front of them, and cannot be used in the plural
  - *music, advice, rice, bread, water, information*

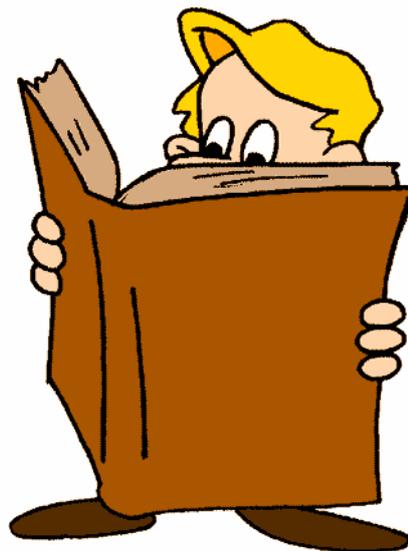
## Note

Some nouns can be countable and uncountable depending on the sense in which they are used.

*We have a chicken in the fridge.* (one whole bird)

*There is chicken on the menu tonight.* (we cannot state exactly how much chicken)

Whether a noun is countable or uncountable can have an effect on other parts of the sentence. For example, you can say “I don’t have *much* money” but you cannot say “I don’t have *many* money”. That is because *much* is used with uncountable nouns while *many* is used with countable. Other similar expressions include *a little* and *a few*.



## 2 ADJECTIVES

We use adjectives to describe nouns such as people and things, or to say how a person or thing...  
*is, seems, becomes, looks, feels, sounds, tastes, or smells*

If you describe your home town to yourself, you would probably come up with words such as  
*big/ small, clean/ dirty, modern/ ancient, expensive/ cheap etc.*  
These are all adjectives as they describe a place.

It is worth pointing out at this stage that adjectives are often confused with adverbs that describe 'how' things are done or happen. Compare these 2 sentences:

1) He looked **angry** to me

2) He looked **angrily** at me

This is an adjective as it describes his appearance and not the action.

This is an adverb as it describes the verb, in other words the way he looked at me.

Adjectives are often used in clusters or groups of 2 or 3. In this 'list form' the last one is separated from the others by 'and'.

*"She is tall, dark, and stunning."*

However, now have a look at this example:

*"She is a tall, dark, stunning teacher."*

Notice that the *and* has disappeared. This is because a noun has ended our list of adjectives.

This little complication brings us neatly on to the next one! And that is, is there any kind of order that these adjectives go in? And if so, what is it? The short answer is that there is an order to them, but it is not exactly written in stone.

As a quick demonstration, imagine a table. Now imagine its *purpose*, (e.g. dining, computer, coffee etc.). Continue by thinking of its *material*, (wooden, glass etc.). Then, consider the *colour*. Lastly, imagine its *age* (old, new etc). Put these together and you should have something like this:

*An old, blue, plastic, dining table.*

Now, you have one basic rule

❖ **Age + colour + material + purpose + NOUN**

To further complicate matters, another rule is that we mention first the quality that we wish to highlight or indicate as important. So let's try another. Think of a noun, then two or three suitable adjectives for that noun. For example, my chosen noun is *student*. And my adjectives could be *intelligent* and *young*. We therefore have *an intelligent, young student*. Here, we are highlighting her intelligence as opposed to her age. Do this 3 or 4 times and try to categorise the adjectives that you've chosen. You should see patterns emerging, such as *opinion, age, NOUN*. Or, *origin/ place, pattern, NOUN*.

However, please note that the more books you read on this topic, the more exceptions and differences of opinion you will find. As a guide, we suggest you teach what seems natural to you in the context you're working in. That is to say adjectives for physical description of people, of objects, for personality, clothes, etc.

## Comparisons (comparatives and superlatives)

Imagine you have two tall students in your class, but they are not the same height. So to end any argument about who is taller than who, you make them stand against the board, and put a mark above the head of each. Then congratulate one of them and write the following sentence next to his/her mark:

❖ *Pete is taller than Gary.*

❖ *Pete is older than Gary.*

❖ *Gary is younger than Pete.*

Do you see any common pattern? For basic, regular comparisons:

***Adjective + 'ER' THAN***

Now put the whole class (i.e. more than two people) against the wall, making marks above people's heads. Likewise, ask everyone how old they are. Let's say we now have a range of heights from Sara who is 1m50 to Pete who is 1m88 and a range of ages from Gary who is 14 to Mark who is 35. We can now make four *superlative* sentences.

*In our class, Pete is the tallest.*

*Sara is the shortest in our class.*

*Gary is the youngest in our class.*

*In our class, Mark is the oldest.*

Again a pattern should be becoming clear. For regular superlatives:

***THE adjective + 'EST'***

It is also important to bear in mind your context; our context above was that of 'in our class'. It might be 'in the world', 'in your town', 'in your country', etc.

***Now, compare the following 2 pairs of sentences***

- 1) Pair 1
  - a) "Elisa is beautifuler than Cecilia"
  - b) "Elisa is more beautiful than Cecilia"
- 2) Pair 2
  - a) "Elisa is the most beautiful doctor in Porto"
  - b) "Elisa is the beautifulest doctor in Porto"

You should have noticed that two of the above sentences are incorrect! Here you should see that there are other rules besides those mentioned above. Look at the table on the following page and see if you can work out the rules.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
handsome	more handsome	the most handsome
funny	funnier	the funniest
late	later	the latest
fat	fatter	the fattest
bad	worse	the worst

Pay great attention to the spelling changes that occur in some of those examples. Answer the following questions:

- ❖ Which one needed the extra 'more/most'?
- ❖ Which doubled its final consonant?
- ❖ Where did a *y* change to an *i*?
- ❖ Which only got an extra *r/st*?

- 1 Adjectives ending with a consonant after a vowel sound form comparatives and superlatives with *-er* and *-est*. For example: neat – neater – neatest, green – greener – greenest, slow – slower – slowest, kind – kinder – kindest, long – longer – longest.
- 2 Monosyllable adjectives ending with a single consonant after a single or short vowel double the final consonant and add *-er* and *-est*. For example: thin – thinner – thinnest, hot – hotter – hottest.
- 3 Some adjectives of two syllables – When ending in a 'y', we change the 'y' to an 'i' and add *-er*, or *-est*. For example, happy – happier – happiest, pretty – prettier – prettiest.
- 4 Monosyllable adjectives ending with a 'y' change the 'y' to an 'i' and add *-er* and *-est*. For example: dry, drier, driest. There are only a few such monosyllables.
- 5 Adjectives which are also past participles of verbs ending in *-d*, use 'more' and 'the most', For example: chilled, more chilled, the most chilled. More on past participles in section 5 later.
- 6 Adjectives of two or more syllables where the above rules don't apply – Use 'more' and 'the most'. For example, beautiful – more beautiful – the most beautiful, modern – more modern – most modern.

### 3 ADVERBS

In general these add meaning or information to the action, quality or state denoted by a verb, hence the name. Adverbs of degree can modify an adjective or another adverb.

There are **5 main types** of adverbs:

- ❖ **Manner** e.g. *well, hard, slowly, quickly*
- ❖ **Place** e.g. *above, up, here, there*
- ❖ **Time** e.g. *now, then, soon, recently*
- ❖ **Degree** e.g. *very, much, really, quite*
- ❖ **Frequency** e.g. *once, twice, sometimes, always*

Other notable types:

- ❖ **Comment/Attitude** e.g. *actually, perhaps, surely, wisely*
- ❖ **Linking** e.g. *firstly*
- ❖ **Viewpoint** e.g. *mentally, morally, officially*
- ❖ **Adding/Limiting** e.g. *also, either, else, only, too*

#### Common mistakes/errors

The most common mistakes and errors lie in spelling and position. But there are some fun ways of getting students used to our conventions.

For instance, there's the all-time classic **Adverb Game** where a student picks an adverb and then a situation and has to mime it according to the adverb.

To reinforce position the students could have a given sentence with a selection of adverbs. First, he/she categorizes them and then places them in the sentence.

An alternative could be to get your students to write a suitable sentence around a given adverb. This can be exchanged with another student who has to justify the choice. You can do this as pair work or team work.

#### Where do adverbs go in a sentence?

There are 3 types of position. Let's call these *Front*, *Middle*, and *End*. But for each type of adverb one position is most common.

Type of adverb	Position	Example
Linking	Front	<u>Finally</u> , I'm settled here. I'm not leaving!
Comment/Attitude	Front	<u>Fortunately</u> everyone else has drunk too much!
Viewpoint	Front	<u>Unofficially</u> everyone smokes hash!
Adding/limiting	Middle	She <u>also</u> makes a good cup of tea.
Frequency	Middle	They <u>always</u> forget to lock the door.
Time	End	I'll see you <u>tomorrow</u> .
Place	End	Shall I drive you <u>home</u> .
Manner	End	She dances <u>gracefully</u> .
Degree	End	He prepared his speech <u>thoroughly</u> .

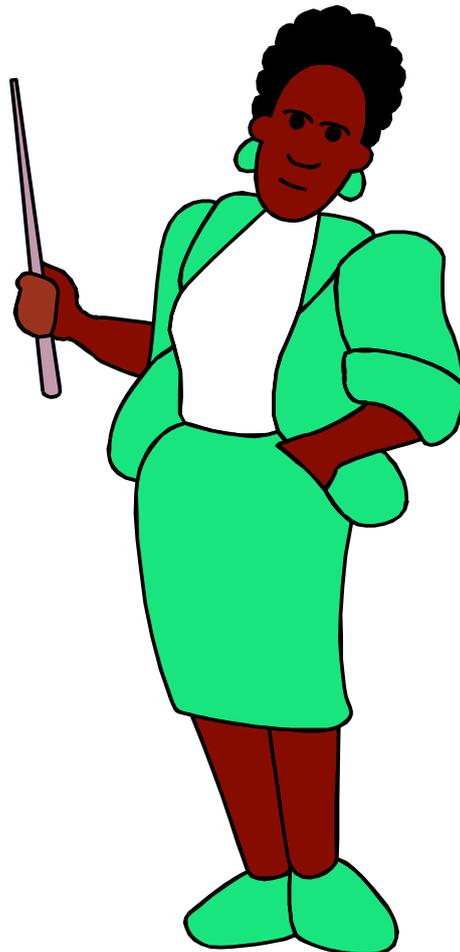
### Spelling of adverbs

Most are simply formed by adding *ly* to an adjective:

*slow – slowly    quick – quickly    honest – honestly*

As ever, there are exceptions:

*tidy – tidily    fast – fast (no change)*



## 4 PREPOSITIONS/CONJUNCTIONS

### Prepositions

#### Usage

Prepositions show the relationship between a noun or a pronoun and some other word in the sentence. Prepositions can be one of the most difficult grammatical points for both students and teachers alike. The difficulty lies in the fact that there is no uniformity when it comes to preposition placement. However, we can say that there are at least three categories *place*, *time*, and *movement*. Certain prepositions can be placed in all categories and others fit in none of them.

#### Main types

##### ❖ Time/date

➤ *at, on, by, before, in, from, since, for, during, to, until, after, about*

##### ❖ Movement

➤ *from, to, in, into, on, onto, by, off, out, through, over*

##### ❖ Place/position

➤ *in, at, on, by, above, over, under, below, beneath, beside, between, near, next to, behind, in front of*

There are some common prepositions that don't neatly fit into any of the above categories such as *of* and *with*.

### Conjunctions

Conjunctions join words or groups in a sentence.

#### They can do 2 things:

##### ❖ Join words of the same class, i.e. pairs of nouns/adjectives/adverbs/verbs/phrases

➤ *and, but, or, nor, yet*

➤ also: *both...and, either...or, neither...nor, not only....but also*

➤ E.g. *He plays squash and rugby.*

*I'm young and reckless.*

*She doesn't drink or smoke.*

##### ❖ Join clauses of sentences

➤ *as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, because, although, unless, so, in order that*

➤ E.g. *He started work as soon as he arrived.*

*I married her because she's gorgeous.*

## 5 VERBS

A verb is a word that is used with a subject to form the basis of a sentence. Most verbs refer to actions or states.

All verbs are either **transitive** or **intransitive**.

In order to explain these two terms, we need to know about the **subject** and **object** of a sentence. In the sentence *Ann kissed David*, Ann is the subject of the sentence, the one 'doing the kissing', and David is the object of the sentence, the one who 'receives' the kiss.

An intransitive verb is a verb that isn't followed immediately by the direct object of a sentence. Rather than being followed by the object, it is followed by, for example, a preposition. *Reply* is an intransitive verb. You can't say *I replied him*, as you have to use the preposition *to*, for example *I replied to him*. Another intransitive verb would be *sleep*. You can't "sleep" anything!

A transitive verb is a verb that is followed directly by an object. A transitive verb such as *love* isn't followed by a preposition, but instead by the person or thing that the subject of the sentence loves, for example *Ann loves David*. *Invite* is another example of a transitive verb, as it must always be followed by an object. You can't just "invite" – you always need to invite someone!

To complicate matters further, some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on how they're used:

Transitive	Intransitive
England lost the game	England lost.
I can't eat this!	Let's eat.
We must leave the form here.	We'd like to leave.
The carpenter watched the apprentice.	The apprentice watched carefully.

There are two other main categories of verbs:

Action verbs – *go, watch, play, eat, walk*, etc

Note that most action verbs are transitive with certain exceptions such as *arrive*.

State verbs – *be, seem, appear, feel*, etc

These verbs are usually intransitive.

The most confusing issue for students with verbs is their use in the formation of tenses (which we will come to later in the course).

English verbs have four principal parts, which will be explained in more detail in later units:

- ❖ base form
- ❖ past simple
- ❖ past participle
- ❖ present participle

The following charts should help:

<b>REGULAR VERBS:</b> The past simple and past participle end in <i>-ed</i>			
Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Present participle
hope	hoped	hoped	hoping
stop	stopped	stopped	stopping
study	studied	studied	studying
etc	etc	etc	etc

Some verbs have irregular forms. Unfortunately many of the most common verbs are irregular, and have no rules as to their formation. Here are just a few examples:

<b>IRREGULAR VERBS:</b> The past simple and past participle do not end in <i>-ed</i>			
Base form	Past simple	Past participle	Present participle
be (am/is/are)	was/were	been	being
beat	beat	beaten	beating
become	became	become	becoming
begin	began	begun	beginning
blow	blew	blown	blowing
break	broke	broken	breaking
bring	brought	brought	bringing
buy	bought	bought	buying
catch	caught	caught	catching
come	came	come	coming
cost	cost	cost	costing
cut	cut	cut	cutting
do	did	done	doing
draw	drew	drawn	drawing
drink	drank	drunk	drinking
drive	drove	driven	driving
eat	ate	eaten	eating
fall	fell	fallen	falling
feel	felt	felt	feeling
find	found	found	finding
fly	flew	flown	flying
forget	forgot	forgotten	forgetting
get	got	got	getting
give	gave	given	giving
go	went	gone	going

grow	grew	grown	growing
hang	hung	hung	hanging
have	had	had	having
hear	heard	heard	hearing
hide	hid	hidden	hiding
hit	hit	hit	hitting
hurt	hurt	hurt	hurting
keep	kept	kept	keeping
know	knew	known	knowing
leave	left	left	leaving
lend	lent	lent	lending
let	let	let	letting
lie	lay	lain	lying
light	lit	lit	lighting
lose	lost	lost	losing
make	made	made	making
meet	met	met	meeting
pay	paid	paid	paying
put	put	put	putting
read	read	read	reading
ride	rode	ridden	riding
ring	rang	rung	ringing
run	ran	run	running
say	said	said	saying
see	saw	seen	seeing
sell	sold	sold	selling
send	sent	sent	sending
show	showed	shown	showing
shut	shut	shut	shutting
sing	sang	sung	singing
sit	sat	sat	sitting
sleep	slept	slept	sleeping
speak	spoke	spoken	speaking
spend	spent	spent	spending
stand	stood	stood	standing
swim	swam	swum	swimming
take	took	taken	taking
teach	taught	taught	teaching
tell	told	told	telling
think	thought	thought	thinking
throw	threw	thrown	throwing
wake	woke	woken	waking
wear	wore	worn	wearing
win	won	won	winning
write	wrote	written	writing

Imagine the difficulties that the students must have, remembering these!

## AUXILIARY VERBS

### Usage

Auxiliary verbs help form a tense or an expression by combining with present or past participles or infinitives of other verbs. An auxiliary verb is not the verb that carries the main meaning; it simply helps form a structure.

For example, *John **is** having a shower at the moment, I **have** been to Italy twice, **Do** you smoke?*

### Auxiliaries

Base form	Present	Past simple	Past Participle
be	am, is, are	was, were	been
do	do, does	did	done
have	have, has	had	had

We will look into the specific usages of auxiliary verbs in a later unit.



## 6 PRONOUNS

Pronouns are words that are used instead/in place of more precise nouns or noun phrases.

### Types

#### ❖ Personal

- *I, me, you, he, him, she, her, we, it, us, they, them*
- As a subject: *I, he, she, it, we, you, they*
- As an object: *me, him, her, it, us, you, them*
- *I hate everybody. Everybody hates me. They have a car. It belongs to them.*

#### ❖ Possessive

- *mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, its* (Note that *its* never contains an apostrophe)
- These types have no article and are not followed by a noun
- *That car is mine.*

#### ❖ Reflexive

- *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*
- *I cut myself shaving this morning.*

#### ❖ Relative

- *who, which, that, whose*
- Used to connect clauses in a sentence. They are used to introduce relative clauses
- *The man that I marry will be rich.*

Whilst being fairly simple in usage, students of many nationalities have a tendency to confuse subject pronouns (which come before a verb in an ordinary sentence) with object pronouns (which normally come after a verb).

Possessive pronouns like *mine* are often confused with possessive adjectives such as *my*. Like other pronouns, possessive pronouns replace nouns, while possessive adjectives describe them.

POSSESSIVE PRONOUN	POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE
mine	my
ours	our
yours	your
theirs	their
its	its
his	his
hers	her

Common confusion between the two involves *his* and *its*, as both can be either possessive pronouns or possessive adjectives, depending on how they're used in a sentence.

Relative pronouns are rather more complicated and are dealt with as a separate issue in a later unit.

## 7 GERUNDS

A gerund is the –ing form of a verb used as a noun (as opposed to the present participle which is the –ing form as a verb structure). A gerund is used in the same way as a noun, i.e. as a subject or an object.

S            V	<b>Playing</b> tennis is fun	<b>Playing</b> is a gerund. It is used as the subject of the sentence
S        V        O	We enjoy <b>playing</b> tennis	<b>Playing</b> is used as the object of the verb <i>enjoy</i>
	<i>Prep</i> O	<b>Playing</b> is used as the object of the preposition <i>about</i>
	He's excited about <b>playing</b> tennis	

S = Subject

V = Verb

O = Object

### Note

- ❖ Some verbs, such as *admit, consider, delay, remember, like* etc. are usually followed by the gerund form when another verb is used
  - E.g. He **admitted killing** the dog.
- ❖ Prepositions are sometimes followed by the gerund if an action is indicated
  - E.g. Sue always has a coffee **before attending** a staff meeting.

## 8 INFINITIVES

An infinitive is **to + the base form of a verb**, e.g. *to talk, to play, to understand*

VERB + INFINITIVE	
Some verbs are followed immediately by an infinitive	<i>I hope to see you again soon</i> <i>He promised to be here by ten</i>
Negative form: <i>not</i> precedes the infinitive	<i>He promised not to be late</i>

VERB + (PRO)NOUN + INFINITIVE	
Some verbs are followed by a noun or pronoun and then an infinitive	<i>Mr. Lee told me to be here at ten o'clock</i> <i>The police ordered the driver to stop</i>
<i>Ask, expect, would like, want</i> and <i>need</i> may or may not be followed by a noun or pronoun or an object	<i>I expect to pass the test</i> <i>I expect Mary to pass the test</i>

## 9 ARTICLES

There are two types of articles in English: **definite** (*the*) and **indefinite** (*a* and *an*). The use of these articles mainly depends on whether you are referring to any member of a group, or to a specific member of a group. Have a look at these sentences:

*This is a football. The football is blue. Footballs are usually white.*

Why do we use *a* in the first sentence, then *the* in the second, when we're talking about the same football? Why is there no article at all in the third sentence?

Lets look at the rules for articles:

### **Indefinite Articles: *a* and *an***

*A* and *an* indicate that the noun modified is indefinite, referring to any member of a group. These indefinite articles are used with singular nouns (and only singular nouns) when the noun is general, as in the example sentence above. Initially, the football could be one of many. (Note that the corresponding indefinite quantity word *some* is used for plural general nouns, but this isn't an article, but a determining adjective.)

The rules are:

- *a* + singular noun beginning with a consonant: *a ball*
- *an* + singular noun beginning with a vowel: *an elephant*
- *a* + singular noun beginning with a consonant sound: *a uniform* (this sounds like 'yoouniform' i.e. begins with the consonant 'y' sound, so *a* is used)
- (*some* + plural noun: *some balls, some elephants*)

If the noun is modified by an adjective, the choice between *a* and *an* depends on the initial sound of the adjective that immediately follows the article, rather than the noun itself:

- *a broken egg*
- *an unusual parrot*
- *an Asian country*
- *a European country* (sounds like 'yoorupian', i.e. begins with consonant 'y' sound)

Note also that in English, the two indefinite articles are used to indicate membership of a category or group as in a profession, nation, type of plant or religion.

- I am a teacher.
- Seamus is an Irishman.
- Henrietta is a practicing Buddhist.
- A lotus is a flower.

## Definite Article: *the*

The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural nouns when the noun is particular or specific. *The* signals that the noun is definite, that it refers to a particular member of a group, in other words, 'you know which one'. *The* is used either when we have mentioned it before, as in *The football is blue* or it's clear which one we mean, as in *Please close the door*.

*The* is also used when a noun refers to something which is unique:

- *the White House*
- *the theory of relativity*
- *the computer age*
- *the earth*

There are a number of specific rules for the geographical uses of *the*:

Do **not** use *the* before:

- names of countries (except some such as *the Netherlands, the Ukraine*, etc)
- names of cities, towns, or states
- names of streets
- names of lakes and bays (except with groups of lakes, such as *the Great Lakes*)
- names of mountains (except with ranges of mountains like *the Andes* or *the Rockies*, or unusual names such as *the Matterhorn*)
- names of continents
- names of islands (except with island chains, such as *the Aleutians, the Hebrides*, or *the Canary Islands*, or if the name of the island follows, as in *The Island of Vancouver* or *The Isle of Wight*)

Do use *the* before:

- names of rivers, oceans and seas (*the Nile, the Pacific*)
- points on the globe (*the Equator, the North Pole*)
- geographical areas (*the Middle East, the West*)
- deserts, forests, gulfs, and peninsulas (*the Sahara, the Persian Gulf, the Black Forest, the Iberian Peninsula*)

*The* is also used with uncountable nouns that are made more specific by a limiting modifying phrase or clause, making an uncountable noun specific:

- *The coffee in my cup is too hot to drink.*
- *The music that Trini Lopez produced is unbearable.*
- *The intelligence of animals is variable but undeniable.*

The is not used with nouns referring to something in a general sense, as in the example *Footballs are usually white*. This is often referred to as the **zero article**, and represented by the symbol 'Ø'. Consider these examples, all of which are talking about general ideas:

- [Ø] *Coffee is a popular drink.*
- [Ø] *Music is enjoyed by many.*
- [Ø] *Intelligence is not easy to assess.*

The zero article (Ø) is also used for general ideas about countable nouns, when the noun is always pluralized:

- *I don't like pigs.*
- *People are strange.*
- *Bananas are yellow.*

To complicate matters further, there are a number of common countable nouns that are often treated as uncountable and used without an article, taking a preposition instead:

- *to/at/in college*
- *to/into/out of bed*
- *to/into/out of prison*
- *to/in/into/out of hospital*
- *to/at/from work*
- *to/into/from town*
- *by day*
- *at night*
- *by car/bus/train/plane/boat*

Putting across the intricacies of the rules for articles to students of English can be a particularly challenging task!

