

# THE DEFINITE ARTICLE (HOW TO USE 'THE' IN ENGLISH)

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In English, we simply use THE, for the masculine, feminine or neutral, or even for the singular or plural.

We say that 'the' is a definite article because it defines something specific. On the contrary, a/an are indefinite articles because they indicate something non-specific.

- the bike
- the bikes
- the boy
- the boys

Did you know that 'the' is the most used word in English language?

## WHEN TO PUT 'THE'?

THE is used in the following cases:

### TO DESIGNATE A GROUP OF PEOPLE

- the elderly
- the poor
- the Canadians

### THE DECADES

- This is a plane from **the 1930's**.
- She was born in **the eighties**.

### TO DESIGNATE THINGS THAT EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT

- the stars
- the earth
- the sun
- the moon

### GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES: OCEANS, RIVERS, ISLAND GROUPS, AND MOUNTAIN RANGES

- the Hudson River
- the Indian Ocean
- the Pacific Ocean
- the Himalayas
- the Nile
- the Alps
- the Rocky Mountains
- the Arctic
- the Dead sea

## SURNAMES IN THE PLURAL

- the Simpsons (= the Simpson family)

## WITH THE NAMES OF MONUMENTS

- the Eiffel Tower
- the Louvre

## WITH THE NAMES OF NEWSPAPERS

- the New York Times
- the Guardian
- the Sun

## COUNTRY NAMES IN THE PLURAL

- the United States of America
- the United Kingdom
- the Netherlands
- the Philippines

⚠ The agreement is generally in the singular:

- The USA is a very big country.

Definite article (the) or indefinite (a/an)?

See the following example:

- Can we go to **the** park? => specific, we already know the park where we want to go.
- Can we go to **a** park? => non-specific, it could be any park.

When Not to use 'the'?

## WITH THE NAMES OF COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS

- She's just returned from Italy.
- Russia is a very big country.
- Asia is bigger than Africa.

## WITH THE LANGUAGE NAMES

- French is spoken in Switzerland.
- English uses many words of Latin origin.
- Japanese is a beautiful language.

## WITH THE NAMES OF THE MEALS

- I like to eat breakfast in the morning. [I like to eat ~~the~~ breakfast in the morning. = FALSE]
- Lunch is my favorite meal. [~~the~~ lunch is my favorite meal = FALSE]

## WITH TITLES COMBINED WITH A NAME

- President Trump is traveling to China.
- Prince Charles is Queen Elizabeth's son.

We can say '*The Queen visited Paris for the first time*' because we don't say her first name.

## WITH PROFESSIONS

- He'll probably study medicine.
- Engineering is a well-paid career.

## WITH UNCOUNTABLE NAMES

- Bread is an important food in France.
- Milk is often added to tea in England.
- War is destructive.

## WITH THE NAMES OF MOUNTAINS, LAKES AND ISLANDS

- He lives near Long Island.
- Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.
- Have you been to Lake Tahoe?

## WITH STREET NAMES, STATIONS AND AIRPORTS

- Victoria Station is in the centre of London.
- Can you show me where is Oxford Street?
- They're flying into Charles de Gaulle.

## WITH PUBLIC PLACES

- Go to school [go to the school = FALSE ]
- Go to work [go to the work = FALSE ]
- Go to hospital [go to the hospital = FALSE ]

⚠ We also say

- Stay in bed [stay in the bed = FALSE ]
- Be at home [be at the home = FALSE ]

## NOTE

For the seasons, you can put or not put THE, both are correct. We can say:

- in summer
- in *the* summer