ESOL – Articles

This companion document covers the same learning as the interactive session, but in a different way so as to be more accessible for learners with sight impairments. Because of this, it does not follow a slide structure.

Welcome

Welcome to this session on articles.

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

* Understand the difference between the definite and indefinite articles
* Know when to use ‘a’ in a sentence
* Know when to use ‘an’ in a sentence
* Know when to use ‘the’ in a sentence

Articles

Articles are words used at the beginning of noun phrases. There are two types of articles.

Definite article:

The word ‘the’ is the definite article. We use ‘the’ to talk about a specific person or thing.

For example:

*Mo went to* ***the*** *Apollo theatre.*

In this example, Mo went to a specific theatre, the Apollo theatre.

Indefinite article:

The words ‘a’ or ‘an’ are indefinite articles. We use ‘a’ or ‘an’ to talk about one person or thing.

For example:

*Lucie bought* ***a*** *game.*

In this example, we don’t know which game Lucie bought.

The definite article

You can use the definite article ‘the’ with any type of noun. Remember, a noun is a word for a person, place or thing.

For example:

*I swam in* ***the*** *sea.*

***The*** *hotel was beautiful.*

***The*** *sun shone.*

The indefinite article

We use the indefinite article ‘a’ or ‘an’ to talk about one person or thing.

An:

We use ‘an’ before a word that starts with a vowel. The 5 vowels are a, e, i, o, u.

For example:

*He cooked* ***an*** *egg for breakfast.*

Because the word ‘egg’ starts with a vowel, we use ‘an’.

A:

We use ‘a’ before a word that does not start with a vowel.

For example:

*Juliette is* ***a*** *mechanic.*

Because the word ‘mechanic’ does not start with a vowel, we use ‘a’.

Introducing a person or thing

We use ‘a’ or ‘an’ when we introduce a person or thing for the first time.

For example:

*She bought* ***a*** *car.*

We use ‘the’ to talk about a person or thing that has already been introduced.

For example:

*She bought a car.* ***The*** *car was silver.*

We can use ‘the’ in the second sentence, because the car has already been introduced in the first sentence.

Checking your knowledge

Read the sentences below and see if you can figure out which word should be used; a, an, or the.

1. I’m going to [blank] supermarket.

Answer: The sentence should read “I’m going to [the] supermarket.”

1. Can you buy me [blank] sandwich?

Answer: The sentence should read “Can you buy me [a] sandwich?”

1. I bought [blank] handbag. [blank] bag was made of leather.

Answer: The sentence should read “I bought [a] handbag. [The] bag was made of leather.”

1. Tommi saw [blank] elephant. [blank] elephant was eating.

Answer: The sentence should read “Tommi saw [an] elephant. [the] elephant was eating.”

Summary

Well done. You have completed this session on the articles.

You should now:

* Understand the difference between the definite and indefinite articles
* Know when to use ‘a’ in a sentence
* Know when to use ‘an’ in a sentence
* Know when to use ‘the’ in a sentence

If you have any questions about anything covered in this session, please speak to your tutor for more help.