

Grammar Review 5 Handout. Articles, Prepositions & Punctuation

Articles: A / An / The / Ø

For each sentence, choose the best word or phrase to complete the gap from the choices below.

1. When Joe was a child, he went to school in _____ Bristol .
2. Charlie can't afford to go to another country on holiday this year. So he's going to have ___ UK holiday this year.
3. We went to a cafe after the movie and had _____ coffee.
4. My brother is _____ doctor in a hospital in Manchester.
5. I need _____ new shoes. These ones are old and they have holes in them.
6. Could you pass me _____ pepper please?
7. I don't know why they are building _____ hospital in the city centre. Bristol already has three hospitals.
8. Sally, Pete is on _____ telephone. He wants to ask you a question.
9. When Obedan got home from school, he went into his room, put his bag on _____ floor and sat down in his favourite armchair.
10. I don't think people will ever live on _____ moon because there is not air up there.
11. Guilherme wanted to visit _____ European city so he decided to go to Paris.

Source: <http://www.ihbristol.com/learn-online/exercise-general/elementary/grammar/articles-a-an-the/89/#answer>

Exercises for practice. Fill in the blank spaces with the correct article.

At Cambridge University there was _____ conference consisting of some of _____ most celebrated biologists in _____ world. Most of _____ speakers had achieved success in their chosen field after many years of difficult research. However, one of _____ most famous researcher, Jane Wills, had received worldwide acclaim from _____ early age. Emma Helme _____ chemist who has written _____ lot about biology, was also there. These scientists told _____ audience of their struggles. _____ most interesting aspect was how _____ data communication via _____ internet changed _____ way they did their research. _____ email, one aspect of _____ data communications was very effective.

Communication is an uncountable noun therefore no plural ending or article. Data communications is a system of communication and the plural can be used. No article is used. However, in the case of one communication then we can use the article. ie a communication was received from the President. Good communication is an uncountable noun.

Grammar Review 5: Articles, Prepositions and Punctuation

Articles

Definite or indefinite

Articles are used before nouns and tell you whether the noun is definite or indefinite.

The articles *a* and *an* are also used to identify nouns in a general or indefinite way and refer to any member of the group. Also, *a* and *an* can mean the number one.

- Take a pencil. (Take one pencil.) It is indefinite as a particular pencil is not asked for.
- She likes to read a book. (She likes to read any book, not a specific one.)

The is a definite article, and identifies nouns in a particular or specific way, or refers to someone or something that is unique - one of a kind. It is used with widely known inventions. It does not mean more than one. It is not the opposite of *a/an*.

- Give me the book on the table. (identifies a specific book)
- The sun rose at seven o'clock. (identifies something that is one of a kind)
- The microchip was an astounding invention. (widely known invention)

The is also used to refer to a someone or something that has been previously mentioned.

- This chapter has a reading passage. The passage is about language.

Extra: Use a or an to introduce a noun the first time it is mentioned, and then the is used afterwards whenever the noun is mentioned.

Plural or singular

When a plural noun or noun phrase is used in a general sense no article is needed.

EXTRA : The is used for a single entity. I.e the market place. \emptyset is used when describing parts that make up the entity. I.e markets.

Common nouns can then be divided into countable and uncountable nouns.

Countable nouns can be made plural by adding an *s* or *es* or *ies*. eg a tree... two trees; a pony... ponies. Used in the singular form they may have a determiner. *a/an/the*. eg an asterisk. Uncountable nouns cannot be made plural. We never use a or an or a final s with them.

NB. abstract nouns are uncountable. Eg Freedom should be treasured. Beauty does not last long. Some concrete nouns are uncountable The cost of oil is high. Rice is an important food.

A or an is used to introduce a singular countable noun. Eg. a donkey. A or an is omitted when a noun is used with a general uncountable meaning. Eg communication

Nouns with a general uncountable meaning cannot be made plural. eg It is possible to transfer **information quickly using a **computer**.**

Dual category nouns

Some nouns may be countable or uncountable, depending on how we use them.

- It is easy to send an email to my overseas friend. Email is faster than mail.
- A communication was received. Good communication is need in essays.

Extra: Communication is an uncountable noun therefore no plural ending or article. Data communications is a system of communication and the plural can be used. No article is used. However, in the case of one communication ie a communication was received from the centre. Then we can use the article. Good communication is an uncountable noun.

Extra: Field-specific nouns: You may find in your particular field of expertise that some uncountable nouns become countable due to specialist words being used. Eg. Grass is uncountable, but botanists and gardeners refer to grasses.

A or An

Use a when the word following it starts with a consonant sound. The sound and not the letter is the important differentiation.

- a book, a hospital, a legitimate proposal, a youth,

Use an when the word following it starts with a vowel sound (not letter).

- an operation, an estimation, an invention, an SOS (the s here is an es sound)

Words that begin with u or h can have either a vowel or a consonant sound. Make the choice based on the sound of the first word after the article, even if that word is not the noun.

- a union, a uniform (use a when the u sounds like the y in you)
- an unbelievable event, an umbrella, a unique umbrella
- an honor, an hour, an honest person
- a hotel, a history book, a historian
- an historian, an historic event (NOTE: words like historic can take either a or an)

Punctuation

1. Introductory word/s, phrases and subordinate clauses.

If the sentence starts with introductory word/s, phrases, or a subordinate clauses then a comma is needed. These are not complete thoughts and they simply introduce the main subject and verb.

Generally, teachers are friendly and helpful.

In fact, the economic fortune of Australia can not be attributed to the current government.

Throughout his early life, Mozart showed signs of genius.

Dissatisfied with his fame, the celebrity went on a reality show.

If you discover that you feel nauseated, then you know the fish was rotten.

As far as the economy is concerned, the mining boom accounts for a large amount of the revenue.

Additional information added to the sentence.

Two commas can be used to separate additional (not vital) information that appears within the sentence but is separate from the primary subject and verb of the sentence. The words within the commas are not necessary to understand the rest of the sentence. In other words, you should be able to take out the section framed by commas and still have a complete and clear sentence. (More on sentences next week.)

Bob Mills, a sophomore from Raleigh, was the only North Carolina native at the Japanese food festival in Cary.

Aaron thought he could see the future, not the past, in the wrinkles on his skin.

Run-ons : a common mistake

If you don't have a connector or subordinator between the two complete and separate thoughts (ie two independent clauses) this is a serious error. Some call it a run-on.

Incorrect: *My professor was very mad I will try harder next time.*

Incorrect: *You gave an excellent presentation, it is a pity your exam results were low.*

Add in a coordinator (and, or, but, so, nor, for etc) or a subordinator (a word like *because, while, although, if, when, since, etc*). You should always have a comma before the coordinator or subordinate when it joins the two clauses.

Correct: *You gave an excellent presentation, but it is a pity your exam results were low.*

Correct: *Although you gave an excellent presentation, it is a pity your exam results were low.*

If the second clause is dependent you do not need a comma.

Eg You wore a lovely hat but didn't wear anything else.

Listing things

Commas can be used to separate items in a series or list. A comma isn't used when AND separates the last two things on the list. A semi-colon is used for more grammatically complex info.

Eg. I went to Australia, New Zealand, Italy and Malta.

A good student listens to his teachers without yawning, reads once in a while, and writes papers before they are due.

Resolving ambiguity

If the information in the sentence can be interpreted in different ways then use a comma to help separate the information. i.e. Create bundles of information by using a comma to separate them.

Semi-colon

Separating items in a list where the items are long or complicated

For example:

- You may use the library on condition that your membership is paid quarterly; that you always return books to their rightful place after using them; that you pay any fines for books returned late; and that you are quiet when using the facilities.

Replacing a linking word to suggest a strong relationship between the two independent clauses.

The other way it is used is to join two independent clauses together. Remember that an independent clause can act as a stand alone sentence, but by joining two independent clauses together we suggest a close relationship between the two.

For example,

The European Union consists of two stages in its history; its original form was known as the European Economic Community (EEC).

Colons

Introducing material (e.g. quotation, data, diagram, etc.) that explains, expands, summarises the comment that precedes it.

- *Shakespeare's most famous quote says: "To be or not to be."*

The results are as follows:

- 80% of students passed
- 20% of students failed

Introducing a list which is long and/or complicated, or to intentionally draw more attention to it.

- Lists/series example: *We covered many of the fundamentals in our writing class: grammar, punctuation, style, and voice.*
- Noun/noun phrase example: *My roommate gave me the things I needed most: companionship and quiet.*

Find the mistake.

- *The very best peaches are: those that are grown in the great state of Georgia.*
- *My favourite cake is made of: carrots, flour, butter, eggs, and cream cheese icing.*
- *There are many different types of paper, including: college ruled, wide ruled, and plain copy paper.*

The clause before the colon must be an independent clause

To join sentences. A colon is used to connect two sentences when the second sentence summarizes, sharpens, or explains the first. Both sentences should be complete, and their content should be very closely related. It isn't a good idea to do this too often

- Example: *Life is like a puzzle: half the fun is in trying to work it out.*

Dashes and Parentheses

Dashes (-) are used to separate information in a sentence and are similar to using parentheses (). However, there is a difference. The parentheses are used to indicate the information is less important than the material in the sentence. Dashes are used to show the additional information is equally important to the material in the sentence.

- Example: *Everything I saw in my new city – from the crashing waves at the beach to the jewelled harbour – brought tears to my eyes.*
- Example: *The students – they were all over eighteen – lined up to get their fingerprints taken so they could enter the Coogee Bay Hotel that Friday night.*

When a sentence has many commas it may become confusing. As mentioned above you can use semi-colons to make it clearer, but you can also use dashes. Eg.

- *Even the easiest tasks, sitting, running, and going to work, were nearly impossible after I hurt my back.*
- *Even the easiest tasks - sitting, running, and going to work - were nearly impossible after I hurt my back.*

Apostrophe

It is used in three main ways.

Ie can't, I'd. Contracted forms should not be used in academic English.

We use apostrophes before or after possessive –s eg. The girl's mother, my boyfriend's house, James's car

We do not use apostrophes with possessive determiners and pronouns. eg. The money is ours. The baby had not opened its presents.

They are also used in the plurals of letters, numbers and abbreviations. Eg A lot of students got C's. I know two GP's in Randwick. It was in the 1970's.

Prepositions at/on/in: time

At + clock time e.g. at dinner time, at 4pm

In+ part of day e.g. I work in the evening, Let's go in the afternoon

On+ particular day e.g. I'll email you on Thursday, I'm seeing her on **Saturday afternoon.**

At+ weekend, public holiday (the entire holiday) e.g. Come at Easter, Come at Christmas **on** Christmas day.

In + longer period e.g. It was in the first week of March. It was made in the 18th century. He died in 1930.

N.B. No preposition is used if the day/year has **each, every, last, next, this** before it:

- I go to England **every** Christmas
- I'll see you **next** Monday afternoon.
- Martin left home **last** evening.

Preposition at/on/in: place

At is used to talk about position at a point or a large place. e.g. Turn left at the next intersection. The train stops at Brisbane.

At is used before proper names of buildings or organisations, when commenting on the activity to occur there or before names of group activities. e.g. Shop at Myers. (I was in a shop). I saw Macbeth at the theatre. I was at play group.

On is used for position on a surface. e.g. It's on the table. It's on Lake Eyre

In is used for position inside a large area. e.g. I was in the bush. Let's go in the office. I live in Sydney.

Preposition Exercises 1

Test your knowledge of the prepositions in / at / nothing - showing place and movement. Choose either in, at or nothing.

1. He lives _____ Zielona Gora.
2. She went _____ home.
3. Piotrek works _____ Harrods.
4. She arrived _____ Manchester for the celebrations.
5. I'm going to stay _____ home this weekend.
6. Joanna works _____ the hospital.
7. I'm going to see Hania _____ France this summer.
8. I arrived _____ work early this morning.
9. She came home _____ early.
10. We stayed _____ the Mieszko Hotel.
11. They visited _____ England last summer.
12. She's going to travel _____ Finland this summer.
13. I'll be _____ school later today.

Preposition Exercises 2

Test your knowledge of the prepositions in / at / on - showing time and date. Choose either in, **at** or **on**.

1. Let's meet _____ seven o'clock.
2. He was born _____ July.
3. I went there _____ 1998.
4. She'll be at work _____ Thursday.
5. We met _____ Christmas day.
6. They drove to Barlinek _____ September 15th.
7. We arrived in this country _____ September.
8. I love to go shopping _____ Christmas time.
9. We get up early _____ the morning.
10. Do you dream _____ night?
11. He's working on his homework _____ the moment.

Source: <http://www.world-english.org/prepositions2.htm>

Punctuation marks exercise.

This exercise will test your understanding of commas, colons, semi-colons and apostrophes. Select the correctly sentence.

1

- A. Spain is a beautiful country; the beache's are warm, sandy and spotlessly clean.
 - B. Spain is a beautiful country: the beaches are warm, sandy and spotlessly clean.
 - C. Spain is a beautiful country, the beaches are warm, sandy and spotlessly clean.
 - D. Spain is a beautiful country; the beaches are warm, sandy and spotlessly clean.
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2

- A. The children's books were all left in the following places: Mrs Smith's room, Mr Powell's office and the caretaker's cupboard.
- B. The children's books were all left in the following places; Mrs Smith's room, Mr Powell's office and the caretaker's cupboard.
- C. The children's books were all left in the following places: Mrs Smith's room, Mr Powell's office and the caretaker's cupboard.
- D. The children's books were all left in the following places, Mrs Smith's room, Mr Powell's office and the caretaker's cupboard.

3

- A. She always enjoyed sweets, chocolate, marshmallows and toffee apples.
- B. She always enjoyed: sweets, chocolate, marshmallows and toffee apples.
- C. She always enjoyed sweets chocolate marshmallows and toffee apples.
- D. She always enjoyed sweet's, chocolate, marshmallow's and toffee apple's.

4

- A. Sarah's uncle's car was found without its wheels in that old derelict warehouse.
- B. Sarah's uncle's car was found without its wheels in that old, derelict warehouse.
- C. Sarah's uncle's car was found without its wheels in that old, derelict warehouse.
- D. Sarah's uncle's car was found without its wheels in that old, derelict warehouse.

5

- A. I can't see Tim's car, there must have been an accident.
- B. I can't see Tim's car; there must have been an accident.
- C. I can't see Tim's car there must have been an accident.
- D. I can't see Tim's car; there must have been an accident.

6

- A. Paul's neighbours were terrible; so his brother's friends went round to have a word.
- B. Paul's neighbours were terrible: so his brother's friends went round to have a word.
- C. Paul's neighbours were terrible, so his brother's friends went round to have a word.
- D. Paul's neighbours were terrible so his brother's friends went round to have a word.

7

- A. Tims gran, a formidable woman, always bought him chocolate, cakes, sweets and a nice fresh apple.
 - B. Tim's gran a formidable woman always bought him chocolate, cakes, sweets and a nice fresh apple.
 - C. Tim's gran, a formidable woman, always bought him chocolate cakes sweets and a nice fresh apple.
 - D. Tim's gran, a formidable woman, always bought him chocolate, cakes, sweets and a nice fresh apple
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9

- A. That tall man, Paul's grandad, is this month's winner.
 - B. That tall man Paul's grandad is this month's winner.
 - C. That tall man, Paul's grandad, is this months winner.
 - D. That tall man, Pauls grandad, is this month's winner.
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Source: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_55.htm