STUDY NOTES   **EPISODE 13: Under the Sea**

DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE ARTICLES

English uses articles to provide information about a noun, whether it is **generic**, **indefinite** or **definite**.

Choosing the appropriate article can be confusing and difficult, especially for those language learners whose native languages do not differentiate between definite and indefinite articles.

These notes cover most of the difficult situations.

> **Study Tips**
>
> **To remind you when to use *the* or *a/an*, remember that *the* belongs to the group of "th" words – this/these, that/those – and refers to a particular or definite person, place or thing.**
>
> **"A" belongs to the words meaning "one" and means an example of one of something.**

In English there are two types of articles - **indefinite** and **definite.**

Indefinite: **a**, **an**
                     a – used with words and abbreviations that begin with a consonant, for example *a pear*, *a DVD*
                     an – used with words and abbreviations that begin with a vowel, for example *an apple*, *an ATM*

Definite: **the**

No article required: no article (∅**).**

Generic nouns and articles: a, an or no article (∅).
A **_generic noun_** is used for a non-specific reference, making a generalization about a whole group of people, objects, places or things. It is a kind of symbol that represents all or any member of an entire group.

USE

Nouns	Singular	Plural
countable	**a, an** **A** chocolate is sweet and hard.	**no article (∅)** Chocolates are delicious.
	Meaning: not one actual chocolate but *any* one chocolate that represents all others	Meaning: *all* chocolates are delicious
uncountable	∅ Chocolate is a nice desert.	
	Meaning: *all* chocolate, generally	

Indefinite nouns and articles: *a* and *an*

An indefinite noun is used to name real people, places or things, but the reference is unspecified. Indefinite articles are used with singular countable nouns.

Singular countable nouns	
Use	**Example**
1. to introduce an unknown person, place or thing into the text for the first time	I bought **a** paper from the newsagent on the corner. It had **an** article about the drought.
2. when the person or thing does not refer to someone or something specifically	He took **a** notebook to class.
3. when making reference to a person's job or a member of a group	He is **a** teacher. She is **an** Australian.
4. when giving a definition	The shark is **a** carnivorous animal.
5. in set phrases: a few, a little, a bottle of, a kilo, a dozen, a lot of etc.	Only **a few** students attended the workshop on the weekend.

Definite nouns and articles: *the*

A definite noun is used when naming a person, place or thing specifically.

Definite nouns: *the*	
Use	**Example**
1. when the reference to the person or thing is known	**The** teacher marked our essays in class. Part time English students are entitled to use **the** library facilities.
2. when it refers to something unique	**The** sun was bright and almost orange.
3. when the noun has been referred to before	They chose a school close to the city. **The** school has an excellent reputation.
4. when referring to someone's job title	**the** chief executive officer
5. with a superlative adjective	Susan got **the** highest mark in the listening test.
6. with time periods	**the** twenty-first century, **the** winter, **the** spring, in **the** morning, **the** future
7. with proper nouns that have an *of* phrase	**the** University of Technology
8. with some geographic names, specifically referring to a group	**the** Netherlands, **the** Philippines, **the** United Kingdom, **the** Himalayas
9. with names of oceans, seas and rivers	**the** Nile, **the** Yangtze, **the** Atlantic (Ocean), **the** Red Sea
10. with regions	**the** West, **the** South Pole, **the** Equator
11. with names of government departments, organisations	**the** Department of Foreign Affairs, **the** United Nations
12. with adjectives naming the nationality of a people	**the** Australians, **the** Thais

Pronunciation of Articles

- *the* is pronounced /ðə/ in front of words beginning with a **consonant**, for example *the Thais* /ðə ˈtaɪz/.

- *the* is pronounced /ði / in front of words beginning with a **vowel**, for example *the Australians* /ði j ɒsˈtreɪljən/; when linking between two vowels a /w/ or /j/ sound is inserted.

- when stressing *the* to emphasis the word following, the pronunciation is always /ði / even before a consonant, for example

    The man shouted to the boys, "Put it on **the** floor, not the table".

    Practise saying these phrases emphasising *the* and then **NOT** emphasising it.

the Antarctic expedition	vs	the Antarctic expedition
/ði j ænˈtaktɪk ɛkspəˈdɪʃən/		/ðə j ænˈtaktɪk ɛkspəˈdɪʃən/

- when stressing *a* to emphasise the word following, the pronunciation is always /eɪ/, even before a consonant, for example

    Practise emphasising *a* and then **NOT** emphasising it in these phrases.

    a computer lab tutorial   vs   a computer lab tutorial
    /eɪ kəmˈpjutə læb tjuˈtɔriəl/ vs /ə kəmˈpjutə læb tjuˈtɔriəl/

- when a word begins with a silent 'h', an *an* is used before the word, for example
  an hour ('h' is silent)   /ən ˈaʊə/

    compare:
    a harbour   /ə ˈhabə/