

## A/an and the

A

Study this example:

I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch.

The sandwich wasn't very good, but the apple was nice.



Joe says 'a sandwich', 'an apple' because this is the first time he talks about them.

Joe now says 'the sandwich', 'the apple' because Karen knows which sandwich and which apple he means – the sandwich and the apple that he had for lunch.

Compare a and the in these examples:

- ☐ A man and a woman were sitting opposite me. The man was American, but I think the woman was British.
- ☐ When we were on holiday, we stayed at a hotel. Sometimes we ate at the hotel and sometimes we went to a restaurant.

B

We use the when we are thinking of a specific thing. Compare a/an and the:

- ☐ Tim sat down on a chair. (perhaps one of many chairs in the room)  
Tim sat down on the chair nearest the door. (a specific chair)
- ☐ Paula is looking for a job. (not a specific job)  
Did Paula get the job she applied for? (a specific job)
- ☐ Have you got a car? (not a specific car)  
I cleaned the car yesterday. (= my car)

C

We use the when it is clear in the situation which thing or person we mean. For example, in a room we talk about the light / the floor / the ceiling / the door / the carpet etc. :

- ☐ Can you turn off the light, please? (= the light in this room)
- ☐ I took a taxi to the station. (= the station in that town)
- ☐ (in a shop) I'd like to speak to the manager, please. (= the manager of this shop)

In the same way, we say (go to) the bank, the post office:

- ☐ I have to go to the bank and then I'm going to the post office. (The speaker is usually thinking of a specific bank or post office.)

We also say (go to) the doctor / the dentist:

- ☐ Caroline isn't very well. She's gone to the doctor. (= her usual doctor)
- ☐ I don't like going to the dentist.

Compare the and a:

- ☐ I have to go to the bank today.  
Is there a bank near here?
- ☐ I don't like going to the dentist.  
My sister is a dentist.

D

We say 'once a week / three times a day / £1.50 a kilo' etc. :

- ☐ 'How often do you go to the cinema?' 'About once a month.'
- ☐ 'How much are those potatoes?' '£1.50 a kilo.'
- ☐ Helen works eight hours a day, six days a week.



## Exercises

## Unit 72

### 72.1 Put in a/an or the.

- 1 This morning I bought a newspaper and ..... magazine. .... newspaper is in my bag, but I can't remember where I put ..... magazine.
- 2 I saw ..... accident this morning. .... car crashed into ..... tree. .... driver of ..... car wasn't hurt, but ..... car was badly damaged.
- 3 There are two cars parked outside: ..... blue one and ..... grey one. .... blue one belongs to my neighbours; I don't know who ..... owner of ..... grey one is.
- 4 My friends live in ..... old house in ..... small village. There is ..... beautiful garden behind ..... house. I would like to have ..... garden like that.

### 72.2 Put in a/an or the.

- 1 a This house is very nice. Has it got ..... garden?  
b It's a beautiful day. Let's sit in ..... garden.  
c I like living in this house, but it's a pity that ..... garden is so small.
- 2 a Can you recommend ..... good restaurant?  
b We had dinner in ..... very nice restaurant.  
c We had dinner in ..... best restaurant in town.
- 3 a She has ..... French name, but in fact she's English, not French.  
b What's ..... name of that man we met yesterday?  
c We stayed at a very nice hotel – I can't remember ..... name now.
- 4 a There isn't ..... airport near where I live. .... nearest airport is 70 miles away.  
b Our flight was delayed. We had to wait at ..... airport for three hours.  
c Excuse me, please. Can you tell me how to get to ..... airport?
- 5 a 'Are you going away next week?' 'No, ..... week after next.'  
b I'm going away for ..... week in September.  
c Gary has a part-time job. He works three mornings ..... week.

### 72.3 Put in a/an or the where necessary.

- 1 Would you like apple? Would you like an apple?
- 2 How often do you go to dentist? .....
- 3 Could you close door, please? .....
- 4 I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that. It was mistake. ....
- 5 Excuse me, where is bus station, please? .....
- 6 I have problem. Can you help me? .....
- 7 I'm just going to post office. I won't be long. ....
- 8 There were no chairs, so we sat on floor. ....
- 9 Have you finished with book I lent you? .....
- 10 My sister has just got job in bank in Manchester. ....
- 11 We live in small flat in city centre. ....
- 12 There's supermarket at end of street I live in. ....

### 72.4 Answer these questions about yourself. Where possible, use the structure in Section D (once a week / three times a day etc.).

- 1 How often do you go to the cinema? Three or four times a year.
- 2 How much does it cost to hire a car in your country? About £20 a day.
- 3 How often do you go to the cinema? .....
- 4 How often do you go away on holiday? .....
- 5 What's the usual speed limit in towns in your country? .....
- 6 How much sleep do you need? .....
- 7 How often do you go out in the evening? .....
- 8 How much television do you watch (on average)? .....