

1 Countable and uncountable nouns

Countable nouns are the names of separate objects, people, ideas etc which *can be counted*. We can use numbers and the article *a/an* with countable nouns; they have plurals.

a cat a newspaper -- three cats two newspapers

Uncountable (or 'mass') nouns are the names of materials, liquids, abstract qualities, collections and other things which we see *as masses without clear boundaries*, and not as separate objects. We cannot use numbers with uncountable nouns, and most are singular with no plurals. We do not normally use *a/an* with uncountable nouns, though there are some exceptions

water (NOT a water, two waters)

weather (NOT a weather, two weathers)

Typical uncountables are :

Materials and substances (plastic, iron, wood, paper, water, air, coffee) *Abstract ideas* (life, fun, freedom, progress, health, time) *Activities* (work, travel, sleep, football, help, research) *Human feelings* (happiness, anger, honesty, hope, respect, courage)

2 Making uncountable nouns countable

Often we can make an uncountable word countable by putting 'a piece of' or a similar expression in front of it.

He never listens to advice.

Can I give you a piece of advice?

Here are some other examples of general/particular pairs.

Uncountable	Countable
accommodation	a place to live (not an accomodation)
baggage	a piece/item of baggage; a case/bag
bread	a piece/loaf of bread
chess	a game of chess
chewing gum	a piece of chewing gum (NOT a chewing gum)
equipment	a piece of equipment; a tool etc
furniture	a piece/article of furniture; a table, chair etc
information	a piece of information
knowledge	a fact
lightning	a flash of lightning
luck	a piece/bit/stroke of luck
luggage	a piece/item of luggage; a case/bag
money	a note; a coin; a sum
news	a piece of news
poetry	a poem
progress	a step forward; an advance
publicity	an advertisement

research	a piece of research; an experiment
rubbish	a piece of rubbish
slang	a slang word/expression
thunder	a clap of thunder
vocabulary	a word/expression
work	a job; a piece of work

3 Change of meaning : some words can be countable or uncountable with a change in meaning. The countable meaning is specific and the uncountable meaning is general.

Countable	Uncountable
a fish (the animal)	some fish (a portion of food)
a business (a company)	business (in general)
a noise (a specific noise)	noise (in general)
a hair (a single piece)	hair (all together)
a painting (one object)	painting (the activity/hobby)
a work (a work of art)	work (in general)
a coffee (a cup of coffee)	some coffee (the material)
a paper (a newspaper)	Some paper (the material)
a wood (a small forest)	some wood (the material)
an iron (for pressing clothes)	some iron (the material)
a glass (for drinking)	some glass (the material)

Look at these examples:

I heard a Strange noise.	I can't stand noise.
I bought a painting last week.	Do you like painting?
A knowledge of boats is useful.	Knowledge is the key to success'
Can you buy a loaf from the shop?	Can you buy some bread from the shop?
I'd like some typing paper.	I'm going out to buy a paper (= a newspaper)

4 abstract nouns: time, life, experience etc

Many abstract nouns can have both uncountable and countable uses, often corresponding to more 'general' and more 'particular' meanings. Compare: - *Don't hurry - there's plenty of time.*

Have a good time.

There are times when I just want to stop work.

Life is complicated. He's had a really difficult life.

She hasn't got enough experience for the job.

I had some strange experiences last week.

5. Determiners with countable and uncountable nouns

Some determiners can only be used with **countable nouns** (e.g. *many, few*); others can only be used with **uncountables** (e.g. *much, little*).

Compare: *How many hours do you work?*
How much money do you earn?

Some or any

Some is common in **positive sentences**. **Any** is common in **questions and negatives**

We've got some juice, but we haven't got any glasses. Have you got any cups?

But we can use **some** in a **question** if it is an **offer** or **request**.

Could I have some more tea, please?

And we can use **any** in **positive sentences** if we mean '**it doesn't matter which**'.

I'm free any day next week'

Any always has the meaning of '**no limit**'. Compare: Is there something I can do to help? (I know what to do) -- Is there anything I can do to help? (I'll do whatever I can)

Have you got some letters for me? (There are particular letters I am expecting)

Have you got any letters for me? (I have no idea if you have letters for me or not)

Many and much

Many is used for **countable nouns** and **much** is used for **uncountable nouns**. They are used mainly in questions and negatives.

How many chairs are there? There aren't many cushions.

How much money have we got? There isn't much water here.

not much difference

Some *countable abstract* nouns can be used *uncountably* after *little*, *much* and other determiners. Common examples are *difference*, *point*, *reason*, *idea*, *change*, *difficulty*, *chance* and *question*.

I don't see much point in arguing about it.

We have little reason to expect prices to fall.

I haven't got much idea of her plans.

Do you think we have much chance of catching the train?

Note the expression *have difficulty (in) ... ing*.

I have difficulty (in) remembering faces. (NOT I have difficulties ...)

a/an with uncountable nouns

With certain uncountable nouns - especially nouns referring to human emotions and mental activity - we often use *a/an* when we are limiting their meaning in some way.

We need a secretary with a first-class knowledge of German. (NOT ... ~~with first class knowledge of German~~)

She has always had a deep distrust of strangers.

That child shows a surprising understanding of adult behaviour.

Note that these nouns cannot normally be used in the plural, and that most uncountable nouns cannot be used with *a/an* at all, even when they have an adjective.

My father enjoys very good health. (NOT ... ~~a very good health~~)

We're having terrible weather.

He speaks excellent English. (Not ~~an excellent~~.)

It's interesting work. (NOT ... ~~an interesting work~~.)

plural uncountables

Some uncountable nouns are plural. They have no singular forms with the same meaning, and cannot normally be used with numbers.

I've bought the groceries. (But NOT ... ~~a grocery~~. OR ... ~~three groceries~~.)

The customs have found a large shipment of cocaine. (But NOT ~~the custom have~~ ...)

Many thanks for your help. (BUT NOT ~~Much thank~~...)

6. Singular nouns with plural verbs

groups of people: The team is/are ...

In British English, singular words like *family*, *team*, *bank*, *government*, *choir* which refer to groups of people, can have either **singular or plural verbs** and **pronouns**. (*The team is/are going to lose*.)

Plural forms are common when the group is seen as a collection of people **doing personal things like deciding, hoping or wanting**. **Singular** forms are more common when the group is seen as an **impersonal unit**. Compare:

- *My family have decided to move to York. They're going in April.*

The average family has 3.6 members. It is smaller than 50 years ago.

We prefer **who** as a relative pronoun with **plural forms**, and **which** with **singular forms**. Compare:

The committee, who are hoping to announce important changes, ...

The committee, which is elected at the annual meeting, ...

When a group noun is used with a singular determiner (e.g. *a/an*, *each*, *every*, *this*, *that*), singular verbs and pronouns are normal. Compare:

The team are full of enthusiasm.

A team which is full of enthusiasm has a better chance of winning.

(More natural than *A team who are full ...*)

In American English singular verbs are normal with most of these nouns in all cases (though *family* can have a plural verb). Plural pronouns can be used.

E.g. *The team is in Detroit this weekend. They expect to win.* ~

A number of, the majority of, a group of, a couple of ... people have ...

Many **singular quantifying expressions** can be used with **plural nouns and pronouns**; **plural verbs** are normally used in this case.

A number of people have tried to find the treasure, but they have all failed.

A group of us are going to take a boat through the French canals.

A couple of my friends plan to open a travel agency.

A lot of social problems are caused by unemployment.

The majority of criminals are non-violent.

Half of his students don't understand a word he says.

plural expressions of quantity with singular verbs

amounts and quantities: *that five pounds*

When we talk about amounts and quantities we usually use singular determiners, verbs and pronouns, even if the noun is plural.

*Where is that five pounds I lent you? (NOT *Where are those five pounds ... ?*)*

Twenty miles is a long way to walk.

*We often use **a/an** before **adjective+plural expression** of quantity*

I waited for a good two hours

I'll need another four tables

calculations : Singular verbs are often possible after **plural number subjects** in spoken calculations.

Two and two is/are four.

*Ten times five is fifty. (OR *Ten fives are fifty.*)*

more than one : *More than one* is generally used with **a singular noun and verb**.

More than one person is going to have to find a new job.

one of ... Expressions beginning **one of** normally have a **plural noun** and a **singular verb**.

*One of my friends is getting married. (NOT ~~*One of my friends are ...*~~)*

common fixed expressions with 'and': Some expressions joined by **and** have **singular determiners, verbs and pronouns**. This happens

when the two nouns are used together so often that we think of them as a single idea.

Your toast and marmalade is on the table.

countries and organisations : Plural names of countries usually have **singular verbs** and pronouns.

The United States is anxious to improve its image in Latin America.

Plural names of organisations may also have singular verbs and pronouns.

Consolidated Fruitgrowers has just taken over Universal Foodstores

People doing/having the same thing : to talk about several people each doing or having the same thing, we normally use **a plural noun** for the repeated idea.

The students can use dictionaries (not ...a dictionary)

*We almost always use **plurals** after **possessives** in this case. e.g. *Six people lost thier lives.**

noun + noun or preposition structure

A noun + noun phrase is often simply like a single noun which happens to have two parts. Common short combinations are often written without a space. Compare:

light	headlight	ceiling light
cloth	washcloth	table cloth

The first noun is often like an object (of a verb or preposition). It is normally singular, even if it has a plural meaning.

a shoe shop = 'a shop that sells shoes'

a toothbrush = 'a brush for teeth'

Remember: the first noun describes the second, not the other way round. A race horse is a kind of horse; a horse race is a kind of race. Chocolate milk is milk; milk chocolate is chocolate.

Noun + noun expressions can often be changed into structures where the second noun becomes a subject and the first an object.

an oil well (= a well that produces oil)

a sheepdog (= a dog that looks after sheep)

the airport bus (= the bus that goes to the airport)

more than two nouns (noun + noun + noun ...)

Three or more nouns can be combined. This is often done in newspaper headlines to save space.

business administration course

DRUGS BOSS ARREST DRAMA

measurement expressions We often use noun + noun in expressions of measurement beginning with a number. We put a hyphen (-) between the number and the measure.

a five-litre can (Not a five-litres can)
a three-day course

less common combinations: noun + noun not used

The **noun + noun** structure is mostly used for very common well-known combinations. For less common combinations, we prefer other structures - for example a preposition phrase. Compare:
the kitchen table (a common kind of table)
a table for the prizes (not a prize table)
road signs signs of tiredness (Not tiredness signs)
a love letter a letter from the insurance company
a history book a book about George Washington

Notes

how much/many We **don't** normally use **noun + noun** in expressions that say **how much/many** of something we are talking about.

a piece of paper (Not a paper piece)

a bunch of flowers a blade of grass

Note the difference between a matchbox etc (**containers**), and a box of matches etc (**containers with their contents**).

noun + noun or possessive structure We **don't** normally use **noun + noun** to talk about particular people or organisations and their possessions or actions. Instead we use a possessive structure.
my father's house (not my father house)
the President's arrival (not the president arrival)

first noun plural In a few **noun + noun** combinations, the first noun is plural.

antiques dealer sports car drugs problem

This is especially the case when the first noun is mainly or only used in the plural, or has a different meaning in the singular.

accounts department customs office clothes shop
savings account arms trade

articles : Articles belonging to the first (modifying) noun are dropped in noun + noun combinations.

army officers (= officers in the army) *a sun*

hat (= a hat that protects you against the sun)

Other structures

Not all compound ideas can be expressed by a noun + noun structure. Sometimes it is necessary to use a structure with *of* or another preposition;

sometimes a structure with possessive's is used.

a feeling of disappointment (NOT *a disappointment feeling*)

letters from home (NOT *home letters*)

cow's milk (NOT *cow milk*)

Problems

Usually it is easy to see whether a noun is countable or uncountable. Obviously *house* is normally a countable noun, and *sand* is not. But it is not always so clear: compare *a journey* (countable) and *travel* (uncountable); *a glass* (countable) and *glass* (uncountable); *vegetables* (countable) and *fruit* (uncountable).

in all weathers; on your travels

A few uncountable nouns have plural uses in fixed expressions.

He goes running in all weathers.

Did you meet anybody exciting on your travels?

One group of nouns only has a plural form and takes a plural verb : clothes, contents, feelings, glasses (for your eyes), jeans, stairs, trousers
My trousers are too tight.
The stairs are very steep.

The word 'news' is followed by a singular verb.
e.g. The news is on.

The word 'police' is followed by a plural verb
The police are coming.

References :

Michael Swan & Catherine Walter : Oxford English Grammar Course (Advanced)

Michael Vince : Intermediate language Practice : English Grammar and Vocabulary

Michael Swan : Practical English Usage

1. personal pronouns

Subject and object forms

		First person	second person	third person
Singular	subject	<i>I</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>he/she/it</i>
	object	<i>me</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>him/her/it</i>
Plural	subject	<i>we</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>they</i>
	object	<i>us</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>them</i>

We use **the subject form** (I, he, we, etc) when the pronoun is *the subject and there is a verb*.

I don't think so. Maybe she's just forgotten.

We use **the object form** (me, her, etc) when the pronoun is *the object of a verb or preposition*.

*I haven't **seen her** today.*

*I hope they haven't gone **without me**.*

The pronoun *on its own* or *after 'be'* usually has the object form. (**I, she etc** are possible, but they are *very formal* and unusual).

Who spilt coffee all over the table?

*~ Me. /Sorry, it was **me**.*

In a more formal style, we prefer **I etc + auxiliary** in short answers etc.

Compare this answer :

Who spilt coffee all over the table? ~ I did.

'Who said that?' 'She did.'

'one' and 'you'

We can use **you** or **one** to mean '**any person**' or '**people in general**' (including the speaker and hearer). *You* is normal in conversation. *One* is more formal than you, and has a possessive « *one's* ».

One/You should always try to keep one's/your promises.

You need / One needs a visa to visit the US.

We **don't** use **one** or **you** to talk about **whole groups**.

They speak French in Quebec. OR French is spoken in Quebec. (Not ~~One speaks French.~~)

They

We can use **they** for *other people in general*.

***They** say too much sugar is bad for you.*

They can mean '*the people around*' or '*the authorities*', '*the government*'.

They play a lot of rugby round here

They're going to build a new swimming-pool here.

They is *informal and conversational*. We use the passive in more formal situations.

*A new swimming-pool **is going to be built** here*

singular they

They/Them/Their(s) have a common **singular indefinite** use, mostly after nouns referring to unidentified people.

Somebody has left their car outside the office.

Would they please move it?

I had a friend who wanted a ticket, and they had to queue for six hours.

There and it

There + be

Look at these examples.

*I really ought to phone home. ~ Well, **there's** a phone box round the corner.*

Could I make myself an omelette? ~ Of course.

***There are** some eggs in the fridge.*

To talk about *the existence of something*, we use **there + be**. **Be agrees with the following noun**.

*There **is** a phone box. BUT There **are** some eggs.*

Here are some more examples.

***There's** a bus at ten to five.*

***There'll be** a meal waiting for us.*

***Were there** any bargains in the sale?*

***There might have been** an accident.*

We also use **there** with words like **a lot of, many, much, more, enough** and with **numbers**.

***There were a lot of** problems to discuss.*

***There's too much** noise in here.*

*Will **there be** enough chairs?*

***There are thirty** days in April.*

Uses of it'

We use **it** for a *thing, an action, a situation or an idea*.

*You've bought a new coat. **It's** very nice, (**it** = the coat)*

*Skiing is an expensive hobby, isn't **it**?*

*You have to fill in all these stupid forms. **It's** ridiculous.*

*I find astrology fascinating. I'm really interested in **it**.*

We use **it** to mean '*the unknown person*'.

Did someone ring? ~ **It** was Vicky. She just called to say she's arrived safely.

We use **it** for *the time, the weather and distance*.

It's half past five already.

It's Sunday tomorrow.

It was much warmer yesterday.

It's fifty miles from here to Brighton.

We also use **it** in structures with a *to-infinitive or a that-clause*.

It was nice **to meet your friends**.

It would be a good idea **to book in advance**.

It's important **to switch off the electricity**.

It's a pity **(that) you can't come with us**.

This is much more usual than, for example, *To meet your friends was nice*.

There or it?

We often use **there** when we *mention something for the first time*, like the picture in this example.

There was a picture on the wall. **It** was an abstract painting.

We use **it** when we talk about *the details*. It means *the picture*.

Here are some more examples.

There's a woman at the door. ~ *Oh, it's* Aunt Joan.

There was a dog in the field. **It** was a big black one.

There's a new one-way traffic system in the town centre. *It's* very confusing.

Reflexive pronouns

Form

Myself is a reflexive pronoun. In the sentence « *I've cut myself* » the words **I** and **myself** mean the same thing. **Myself** refers back to the subject, **I**.

	First person	second person	third person
Singular	myself	yourself	himself/herself/itself
Plural	ourselves	yourselves	themselves

Use

We can not use **me, you, him**, etc *to refer to the subject*. Compare these sentences.

*When the policeman came in, the gunman shot **him**. (**him** = the policeman)*

*When the policeman came in, the gunman shot **himself**. (**himself** = the gunman)*

We can use a reflexive pronoun after a *preposition*.

*The children are old enough to look **after themselves**.*

But after a preposition of *place*, we can use **me, you, him**, etc.

*In the mirror I saw a lorry **behind me**.*

*Mike didn't have any money **with him**.*

*Laura thought she recognized the woman standing **next to her**.*

Idioms with reflexive pronouns

Look at these examples :

*We really **enjoyed ourselves**.* (= had a good time)

*I hope the children **behave themselves**.* (= behave well)

*Just **help yourself** to sandwiches, won't you?* (= take as many as you want)

*Please **make yourself at home**.* (= behave as if this was your home)

*I don't want to be left here **by myself**.* (= on my own, alone)

Verbs without a reflexive pronoun

Some verbs do not usually take a reflexive pronoun, although they may in other languages.

*We'd better **hurry**, or we'll be late, NOT ~~We'd better hurry ourselves~~.*

*Shall we **meet** at the cinema?*

*I **feel** uncomfortable.*

*Just try to **relax**.*

Some of these verbs are: **afford, approach, complain, concentrate, decide, feel + adjective, get up, hurry (up), lie down, meet, remember, rest, relax, sit down, stand up, wake up, wonder, worry**

We do not normally use a reflexive pronoun with **change** (clothes), **dress** and **wash**.

*Daniel **washed** and **changed** before going out.*

But we can use a reflexive pronoun when *the action is difficult*.

*My friend is disabled, but she can **dress herself**.*

Emphatic pronouns and each other

Emphatic pronouns

*Trevor and Laura are decorating their living-room **themselves**.*

An emphatic pronoun is a word like **myself**, **yourself**.

It has *the same form as a reflexive pronoun*.

Here the emphatic pronoun means 'without help'.

Trevor and Laura are decorating the room without help from anyone else.

Compare *They're having the room wallpapered (by a decorator)*

Here are some more examples.

*I built this boat **myself**.*

*My sister designs all these clothes **herself**.*

*Are you doing all the painting **yourselves**?*

When we say these sentences, we stress **self** or **selves**.

Now look at these examples.

*The manager **himself** welcomed us to the hotel.*

(= The manager welcomed us, not someone else.)

*Although she is very rich, the Queen **herself** never carries any money.*

*The house **itself** is small, but the garden is enormous.*

*Of course the children have been to the zoo. You **yourself** took them there last year.*

Here the emphatic pronoun comes *after the noun or pronoun it relates to*.

Each other

Look at this example.

*Andrew and Jessica help **each other** with their work.*

This means that Andrew helps Jessica, and Jessica helps Andrew.

Here are some more examples.

*Mark and Alan aren't really friends. They don't like **each other** much.*

*I'm still in touch with Kirsty. We write to **each other**.*

One another has the same meaning.

*We send **each other/one another** Christmas cards every year.*

We can also use the possessive form **each other's**.

*Tom and Mark wrote down **each other's** phone numbers.*

This means that Tom wrote down Mark's number, and Mark wrote down Tom's number.

Compare **each other** and **themselves**.

They're laughing at each other.

They are laughing at themselves.

The pronoun one/ones

We use **one** and **ones** to avoid repeating a countable noun. **one** for a singular noun and **ones** for a plural noun

'Another slice of lamb?' 'just a small one, please.'

I'm going to wear my new earrings: the ones I bought in Egypt

We cannot use **one** or **ones** with an **uncountable** noun.

There isn't any brown bread. Would you like white (bread) ? (not ~~white one~~)

*There was no hot water. I had to wash in **cold**.*

Structures with one/ones

Sometimes we can either put in **one/ones** or leave it out.

*These bowls are nice. What about **this (one)**?*

We can do this after **this**, **that**, **these** and **those**; after **each** or **another**; after **which**; or after a superlative, e.g. **easiest**.

*I don't like these sweaters. I prefer **those (ones)** over there.*

*I tried all three numbers, and **each (one)** was engaged.*

*The product is available in all these colours. **Which (one)** would you like?*

*The last question is the **most difficult (one)**.*

Sometimes we cannot leave out **one/ones**.

*Our house is the **one** on the left, NOT ~~Our house is-the-on the-left~~.*

We cannot leave out **one/ones** after **the** or **every** or after **an adjective**.

*The film wasn't as good as **the one** we saw last week.*

*I rang all the numbers, and **every one** was engaged.*

*I'd like a box of tissues. A **small one**, please.*

*I threw away my old trainers and bought some **new ones**.*

A small one and one

We can say a **small one**, a **red one**, etc but NOT **a one**.

*I've been looking for a coat, but I can't find **a nice one**.*

*I've been looking for a coat, but I can't find **one**.*
Here we use **one** instead of **a coat**.
Here are some more examples.
*We decided to take a taxi. Luckily there was **one** waiting.*
*If you want a ticket, I can get **one** for you.*

Now look at these examples with **one, some, it** and **them**.

*I haven't got a passport, but I'll need **one**. (one = a passport)*
*I haven't got any stamps, but I'll need **some**. (some = some stamps)*
*I've got my passport. They sent **it** last week. (it = the passport)*
*I've got the stamps. I put **them** in the drawer, (them = the stamps)*

One and **some/any** are like **a**, but **it** and **they/them** are like **the**.

We use **one** and **some/any** when we aren't saying which, and we use **it** and **they/them** to be specific (when we know which).

Everyone, something, etc

Look at these examples.

***Everyone** enjoyed the show. It was a great success.*
*The police searched the house but found **nothing**.*
*Let's find **somewhere** to eat.*
***Nobody** came into the shop all afternoon.*

With **every, some** and **no**, we can form words ending in **one, body, thing** and **where**.

Everyone/everybody = all the people
everything = all the things
everywhere = (in) all the places
someone/somebody = a person
something = a thing
somewhere — (in) a place
no one/nobody = no person
nothing = no things
nowhere = (in) no places

Words ending in **thing** can also mean actions or ideas.

***Something** awful has happened.*
*You must tell me **everything**.*

Someone and anyone, etc

We can also form words with **any**: **anyone, anybody, anything, anywhere**.

Positive: *There's someone in the phone box.*
Negative: *I looked round the shops, but I didn't buy anything.*
Question: *Has anyone seen today's newspaper?*
Offer/Request: *Could you do something for me, please?*

We can also use words with **any** in a positive sentence.

This door is always left open. Anyone could just walk in here.

Where shall we go? ~ Anywhere. I don't mind.

In these sentences **anyone** means 'it doesn't matter who', and **anywhere** means 'it doesn't matter where'.

Singular and plural

We use a singular verb after **everyone, something, anything**, etc.

***Everywhere** was very crowded.*
***No one** knows how to start the motor.*

After words with **one** or **body**, we normally use **they/them/their**, even though the verb is singular.

***Everyone** is having **their** lunch.*
***Nobody** wants to have **their** coffee yet.*

We can also use **he, she, him, her, his**, etc with **someone/somebody** when we know the person's sex.

***Someone** left **their/her** handbag behind.*

Other structures

After **everyone, something**, etc we can use an adjective.

*Let's go **somewhere nice**.*
*Is there **anything interesting** in that magazine?*

We can also use **else**.

*We always play Scrabble. Let's play **something else**. (= a different game)*
*Henry wore a suit, but **everyone else** had jeans on. (= all the other people)*

Words ending in **one** and **body** have a possessive form (with 's).

***Someone's** cat is on our roof. I need to be informed about **everybody's** plans.*

References : John Eastwood : Oxford Practice Grammar (Intermediate)
Michael Swan & Catherine Walter : Oxford English Grammar Course (Advanced)

A/ an and the

✚ We use **a/an** when the listener does not know which person or thing we are talking about.

Compare :

*Tim works in **a** factory. (we don't know which factory)*

*Tim works in **the** factory down the road. (we know which factory)*

✚ If we refer to something *for the first time* it will be new information for the listener and so we use **a/an**. *Other references to the same thing* (when the same thing is mentioned again) use the definite article **the** because now the listener knows what we are talking about.

*I've bought **a** new mobile phone, It's great. **The** phone connects to the internet.*

Note :

A/an goes only with a singular countable noun. With a plural or an uncountable noun we use **some**.

The goes with both singular and plural nouns and with uncountable nouns.

✚ 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)*

✚ We use **the** when it is **clear** in the situation which thing or person we mean (both the speaker and the hearer know which one(s) is /are meant).

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**:

Clare 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?

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.

A man/he and the man/someone

We use **a/an** + noun or **someone/something** when we aren't saying which one.

***A man/Someone** booked into a hotel.*

*He left **a case/something** behind.*

We use **the** + noun or **he/she/it** when we know which one.

***The man/He** didn't return to the hotel.*

***The case/It** contained clothes.*

We use **the** when there is **only one of the things** we are talking about.

Have you ever crossed the equator? (there is only one equator)

What's the Longest river in Europe?

Our apartment is on the tenth floor.

Buenos Aires is the capital of Argentina.

I'm going away at the end of this month.

We use **the** before **same** (*the same*) :

Your sweater is the same colour

Are these keys the same?' 'No, they're different.'

We say:

the sun the moon the earth the world
the universe the sky the sea the ground
the environment the internet

I Love to Look at the stars in the sky. (not ~~in sky~~)

The internet has changed the way we Live.

The earth goes round the sun, and the moon goes round the earth.

We say **space** (without the) when we mean '**space in the universe**'. Compare

There are millions of stars in space. (not in the space)

I tried to park my car, but the space was too small.

✚ We use **a/an** to say **what kind** of thing something is (to classify something)

*The play was **a comedy**.*

*The man's disappearance was **a mystery**.*

The sun is a star. (= one of many stars)

A **phrase** which **describes something** has **a/an**.

*It was **a lovely day**.*

*Cheltenham is **a nice old town**.*

*It's **a big hotel**. This is **a better photo**.*

The hotel we stayed at was a very nice hotel.

But we use **the** with a **superlative**.

*It's **the biggest hotel** in town.*

*This is **the best photo**.*

We use **a/an** to say what **someone's job** is.

*My sister is **a secretary**.*

*Nick is **a car salesman**.*

We say: (go to) **the cinema, the theatre**.

I go to the cinema a lot, but I haven't been to the theatre for ages.

When we say the cinema / the theatre, we do **not** necessarily mean **a specific cinema or theatre**.

We usually say **the radio**, but **television/TV** (without the). Compare:

I listen to the radio a lot, but I watch television a lot.

We heard it on the radio, but We watched it on TV.
The television / the TV = the television set:

Can you turn off the television, please?

We do not normally use **the** with **breakfast/lunch/dinner**:

What did you have for breakfast?

We had lunch in a very nice restaurant.

But we use **a/an** if we say '**a big lunch**', '**a wonderful dinner**', '**an early breakfast**' etc.:

We had a very nice lunch. (not We had very nice lunch)

We do not use **the** before **noun + number**. For example, we say:

Our train leaves from Platform 5. (not ~~the Platform 5~~)

(in a shop) Do you have these shoes in size 43? (not ~~the size 43~~)

In the same way, we say: Room 126 (in a hotel), page 29 (of a book), question 3 (in an exam), Gate 10 (at an airport) etc.

A or an?

The choice of **a** or **an** and the pronunciation of **the** depend on the **next sound**.

a /ə/ or the /ðə/ + consonant sound			an /ən/ or the /ði/ + vowel sound		
a cup	/k/	the /ðə/ cup	an aspirin	/æ/	the /ði/ aspirin
a poster	/p/	the /ðə/ poster	an egg	/e/	the /ði/ egg
a shop	/ʃ/	etc.	an Indian	/ɪ/	etc.
a boiled egg	/b/		an old photo	/əʊ/	
a record	/r/		an umbrella	/ʌ/	

It is **the sound** of the next word that matters, **not the spelling**.

a one-way street	/w/	an open door	/əʊ/
a uniform	/j/	an uncle	/ʌ/
a holiday	/h/	an hour	/aʊ/
a U-turn	/j/	an MP	/e/

A/an and one

A/**a/an** and **one** both refer to one thing. Using **one** puts more emphasis on the number.

*Henry gave the taxi driver **a note**. (not a coin)*

*Henry gave the taxi driver **one note**. (not two)*

We use **one** (not **a/an**) when we mean one of a larger number.

***One question/One of the questions in the exam** was more difficult than the others.*

*The team wasn't at full strength. **One player/One of the players** was injured.*

The (school / the school etc.)

Compare school and the school:

Ellie is ten years old. Every day she goes to school. She's at school now. School starts at 9 and finishes at 3. We say a child goes to school or is at school (as a student). We are not thinking of a specific school. We are thinking of school as a general idea - children learning in a classroom.	Today Ellie's mother wants to speak to her daughter's teacher. So she has gone to the school to see her. She's at the school now. Ellie's mother is not a student. She is not 'at school', she doesn't 'go to school'. If she wants to see Ellie's teacher, she goes to the school (=Ellie's school, a specific building).
--	--

We use prison (or jail), hospital, university, college and church in a similar way. We do **not** use **the** when we are thinking of **the general idea of these places and what they are used for**.

Compare:

Ken's brother is in prison for robbery. (He is a prisoner. We are not thinking of a specific prison.)	Ken went to the prison to visit his brother. (He went as a visitor, not as a prisoner.)
Joe had an accident last week. He was taken to hospital. He's still in hospital now. (as a patient)	Jane has gone to the hospital to visit Joe. She's at the hospital now. (as a visitor, not as a patient)
When I leave school, I plan to go to university / go to college, (as a student)	I went to the university to meet Professor Thomas, (as a visitor, not as a student)
Sally's father goes to church every Sunday, (to take part in a religious service)	Some workmen went to the church to repair the roof, (not for a religious service)

With **most other places**, you need **the**. For example, **the station, the cinema, the shop, the pub, the office, the library, the house, the factory, etc.**

Here are some phrases with other nouns :

bed: <i>in bed, go to bed</i> (to rest or sleep)	But sit on the bed , make the bed
home: <i>at home, go home, come home, leave home</i>	But in the house , to the house , in the home
sea: <i>at sea</i> (= sailing)	But on the sea , by the sea , at/to the seaside ,

go to sea (as a sailor)	on/to the coast
town: <i>in town, go into town, leave town</i>	But the town centre, the city, the village
work: <i>at work, go to work, leave work</i>	But the office, the factory

I'm going to bed now. Goodnight.
Do you ever have breakfast in bed? But :
I sat down on the bed. (a specific piece of furniture)
Chris didn't go to work yesterday.
What time do you usually finish work?
It's late. Let's go home.
Will you be at home tomorrow afternoon?
Keith works on ships. He's at sea most of the time.
but I'd like to live near the sea.
It can be dangerous to swim in the sea.

Cars/the cars

John : I like ice hockey. It's my favourite sport. And I like old cars. I love driving them.

Ann : I like music. Classical music, I mean. And I love parties, of course.

We can use **a plural noun** (e.g. **cars, parties**) or an **uncountable noun** (e.g. **ice hockey, music**) without **the**. **I love parties** means that I love all parties, parties in general.

General and specific meanings

<u>GENERAL</u>	<u>SPECIFIC</u>
A plural noun or an uncountable noun on its own has a general meaning .	The + plural noun or uncountable noun has a specific meaning .
Children learn from playing. (= children in general)	We took the children to the zoo. (= a specific group, perhaps the speaker's children)
Cars are expensive to buy.	The cars had both broken down.
Elephants are intelligent animals.	We saw the elephants at the zoo.
You always need money .	Laura put the money in her purse.
Glass is made from sand.	David swept up the broken glass .
Natasha is studying music . (= all music, music in general)	The music was too loud. (= the music at a specific time, at a party for example)

The difference between 'something in general' and 'something specific' is not always very clear.

In general (without the)

I like working with people.
(= people in general)

I like working with people who say what they think,
(not all people, but 'people who say what they think' is still a general idea)

Do you like coffee?

(= coffee in general)

Do you like strong black coffee? (not all coffee, but 'strong black coffee' is still a general idea)

Specific people or things (with the)

I Like the people I work with. (= a specific group of people)

I didn't like the coffee we had after dinner.

(= specific coffee)

We say '*most people / most books / most cars*' etc. (not the most...):

Most shops accept credit cards, (not The most shops)

A *phrase or clause* after the *noun* often shows that it is *specific*.

Look at *the oil on your sweater*.

The apples you gave me were nice.

A *phrase with of* usually takes **the**. Compare these two structures.

a book on *Irish history*

a book on *the history of Ireland*

Special uses of the

Study these sentences:

The giraffe is the tallest of all animals.

The bicycle is an excellent means of transport.

When was the telephone invented?

The dollar is the currency of the United States.

In these examples, the ... does not mean *one specific thing*.

The giraffe = a specific type of animal, not a specific giraffe.

We use **the** in this way to talk about *a type of animal, machine etc. (general statements about animals and about inventions and discoveries)*

In the same way we use **the** for *musical instruments*:

Can you play the guitar?

The piano is my favourite instrument.

Compare **a** and **the**:

I'd like to have a piano. but I can't play the piano.

We saw a giraffe at the zoo. but The giraffe is my favourite animal.

Note that we use **man** (= human beings in general / the human race) without the:

What do you know about the origins of man? (not the man)

We do not use **the** with **sports**.

Shall we play tennis? NOT Shall we play the tennis

The + adjective

We use **the + adjective** (without a noun) to talk about **groups of people**. For example:

the young the rich the sick the injured the old the poor the disabled the dead the elderly the homeless the unemployed

The young = young people, the rich = rich people etc.:

Do you think the rich should pay higher taxes?

We need to do more to help the homeless.

The young / the rich / the injured etc. are **plural** in meaning. For example, you cannot say 'a young' or 'the injured' for one person. You must say 'a young person', 'the injured woman' etc.

Note that we say 'the poor' (not the poors), 'the young' (not the youngs) etc.

The + nationality

You can use **the + nationality adjectives** that end in **-ch** or **-sh** (the French / the English / the Spanish etc.). The meaning is 'the people of that country':

The French are famous for their food. (= the people of France)

The French / the English etc. are **plural** in meaning. We do not say 'a French / an English'.

You have to say *a Frenchman / an Englishwoman* etc.

We also use **the + nationality** words ending in **-ese** (the Chinese / the Sudanese / the Japanese etc.):

The Chinese invented printing.

But these words *can also be singular* (a Chinese, a Japanese etc.).

Note also: a Swiss (singular) and the Swiss (= the people of Switzerland)

With other nationalities, the plural noun ends in **-s**.
For example:

an Italian -Italians a Mexican - Mexicans
a Turk -Turks

With these words (Italians etc.), we do not normally use **the** to talk about the people in general

Names with and without the

We do not use **the** with *names of people* {'Helen', 'Helen Taylor' etc.}. In the same way, we do not use **the** with most **names of places**. For example:

continents	Africa (not the Africa), Europe, South America
countries, states etc.	France (not the France), Japan, Brazil, Texas
islands	Sicily, Bermuda, Tasmania
cities, towns etc.	Cairo, New York, Bangkok
mountains	Everest, Kilimanjaro

But we use **the** in **names** with **Republic, Kingdom, States** etc.:

*the Czech Republic the United Kingdom (the UK)
the Dominican Republic the United States of America (the USA)*

Compare: Have you been to Canada or the United States?

When we use *Mr/Mrs/Captain/Doctor etc. + a name*, we do not use **the**. So we say:

Mr Johnson / Doctor Johnson / Captain Johnson / President Johnson etc. (not the ...) Uncle Robert / Saint Catherine / Princess Maria etc. (not the ...)

Compare:

*We called the doctor.
We called Doctor Johnson, (not the Doctor Johnson)*

We use **Mount** (= mountain) and **Lake** before a name in the same way (*without the*):

*Mount Everest (not the ...) Mount Etna
Lake Superior Lake Victoria*

*They Live near the lake.
They Live near Lake Superior, (not the Lake Superior)*

We use **the** with the names of *oceans, seas, rivers and canals*:

*the Atlantic (Ocean) the Red Sea
the Indian Ocean the Channel (between the Mediterranean (Sea) France and Britain)*

We use **the** with the *names of deserts*:
the Sahara (Desert) the Gobi Desert

We use **the** with *plural names of people and places*:

people	the Taylors (= the Taylor family), the Johnsons
countries	the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United States
groups of islands	the Canaries / the Canary Islands, the Bahamas
mountain rang	the Rocky Mountains / the Rockies, the Andes, the Alps

The highest mountain in the Andes is (Mount) Aconcagua.

We say:

*the north (of Brazil) but northern Brazil (without the)
the south-east (of Spain) but south-eastern Spain*

Compare:

*Sweden is in northern Europe; Spain is in the south.
Also the Middle East, the Far East*

We also use north/south etc. (without the) in the names of some regions and countries:

North America South Africa

Note that on maps, **the** is not usually included in the name.

Names without the

We do not use **the** with *names of most city streets/roads/squares/parks* etc.:

*Union Street (not the ...) Fifth Avenue Hyde Park
Queens Road Broadway Times Square*

Names of *important public buildings* and *institutions* (for example, airports, stations, universities) are often two words:

Manchester Airport Harvard University

The first word is the name of a place ('Manchester') or a person ('Harvard'). These names are usually *without the*. In the same way, we say:

Victoria Station (not the ...) *Canterbury Cathedral*
Edinburgh Castle *Buckingham Palace*
Cambridge University *Sydney Harbour*

Compare:

Buckingham Palace (not the ...) but the Royal Palace

('Royal' is an adjective - it is not a name like 'Buckingham'.)

Most other buildings have names with **the**. For example:

hotels	the Sheraton Hotel, the Holiday Inn
theatres/cinemas	the Palace Theatre, the Odeon (cinema)
museums/galleries	the Guggenheim Museum, the National Gallery
other buildings	the Empire State (Building), the White House, the Eiffel Tower

We often *leave out* the **noun**:

the Sheraton (Hotel) *the Palace (Theatre)*
the Guggenheim (Museum)

Some names are only **the + noun**, for example:

the Acropolis *the Kremlin* *the Pentagon*

Names with **of** usually have **the**. For example:

the Bank of England *the Museum of Modern Art*
the Great Wall of China *the Tower of London*

Note that we say:

the University of Cambridge *but Cambridge University (without the)*

Many shops, restaurants, hotels, banks etc. are named after people. These names end in **-s** or **-s**.

We do not use **the** with these names:

McDonald's (not the ...) *Barclays (bank)*
Joe's Diner (restaurant) *Macy's (department store)*

Churches are often named after saints (St = Saint):

St John's Church (not the St Johns Church)
St Patrick's Cathedral

Most newspapers and many organisations have names with **the**:

Newspapers : the Washington Post, the Financial Times, the Sun

Organisations : the European Union, the BBC, the Red Cross

Names of companies, airlines etc. are usually without **the**:

Fiat (not the Fiat) *Sony* *Singapore Airlines*
Kodak *IBM* *Yale University Press*

Stations and airports; important buildings

We do not use the with most stations and airports; with religious, educational and official buildings or with palaces and houses.	Exceptions are names with of or with a noun (<i>science</i>) or adjective (<i>open</i>).
<i>to Waterloo (Station)</i>	<i>at the University of York</i>
<i>at Orly (Airport)</i>	<i>in the Palace of Westminster</i>
<i>near St Mary's Church</i>	<i>the Science Museum</i>
<i>Merton College Norwich</i>	<i>the Open University</i>
<i>Museum</i>	<i>past the White House</i>
<i>Lambeth Palace</i>	
<i>Ashdown House</i>	

On Friday, for lunch, etc

Phrases of time are usually without **a/an** or **the**.

*We're meeting on **Friday** for **lunch**.*

But we use **a/an** or **the** if there is a phrase or clause after **Friday**, **lunch**, etc.

*It was **the Friday** before she went to Australia.*

We normally use **a/an** or **the** if there is an adjective.

*We had **a good lunch**.*

Years, seasons and months

<i>I was born in 1974.</i>	<i>That was the year I was born.</i>
<i>We play cricket in summer/in the summer.</i>	<i>It was the winter of 1995 when things started to go wrong for me.</i>
<i>Winter always depresses me.</i>	

I start the course in **September** the company.

Special times

We go away at **Christmas**. We had **a** wonderful **Christmas**.
Easter is early this year. I started work here **the**
 I'll be home for **Easter** before last.
Thanksgiving.

Days of the week

Yes, **Thursday** will be convenient. The storm was on **the**
Thursday of that week.
 I'll see you on **Tuesday** evening. We went surfing at **the**
weekend.

Parts of the day and night

I can't sleep at **night**. It's warmer in/during
 I prefer to travel by **the day**.
day/by night. Someone got up in/
 during **the night**. We're
 I must get to bed meeting in **the morning**.
 before **midnight**. They arrived at the hotel
 in **the** evening.
 We were on the beach It was **a** beautiful
 at **sunset**. **sunset**.
 I hope to get there I couldn't see in **the**
 before **dark**. **dark**.

Meals

I'll see you at We had **a** quick
breakfast. **breakfast**.
 We have **supper** at **The supper** David
 about eight. cooked was excellent.
 I'm going out after **The meal** was very nice.
lunch. We'll need **an evening**
meal.

Quite a, such a, what a, etc

After **quite**, **such** and **what** we can use a phrase with **a/an**, e.g. *a game*. There is often an adjective as well. e.g. *such a good team*.

Very, quite, rather, etc

A/an goes before **very**, **fairly**, **really**, etc.

*It's **a** very old house. It's **a** fairly long walk.*
*I made **a** really stupid mistake.*

But **a/an** usually goes after **quite**.

*It's quite **an** old house.*
*There was quite **a** crowd.*

A/an can go either before or after **rather**.

*It's **a rather** old house, OR It's **rather an** old house.*

We can also use **very**, **quite**, **rather**, etc + **adjective + plural or uncountable noun**.

*They're **very old** houses. This is **quite nice** coffee.*

So and such a

so

The structure is **be + so + adjective**.

*The test was **so easy**.*
 (NOT ~~It was a so easy test~~).

*The hill was **so steep**.*
*It's **so inconvenient** without a car.*

*The weather is **so nice**.*

*Tom's jokes are **so awful**.*

Such a/an

The structure is **such + a/an (+ adjective) + noun**.

*It was **such an easy test**.*
 (NOT ~~it was a such easy test~~).

*It was **such a steep hill**.*
*It's **such a nuisance** without a car.*

We can also use **such** + an adjective + a plural or uncountable noun.

*We're having **such nice weather**.*

*Tom tells **such awful jokes**.*

What a

In an exclamation we can use **what a/an** with a singular noun and **what** with a plural or uncountable noun

+ singular noun: **What a goal!** **What a good idea!**

+ plural noun: **What lovely flowers!** **What nice shoes**
you've got on!

+ uncountable noun: **What rubbish!** **What fun** we had!

Some

Some with a plural noun means 'a number of, and **some** with an uncountable noun means 'an amount of.

*Claire took **some photos**.*

*Can you lend me **some money**?*

Claire took some photos means that she took a number of photos, although we may not know the exact number.

We do not use **some** when we are describing something or saying what kind of thing it is.

*Vicky has **blue eyes**. Is this **salt** or **sugar**?*

*These are **marvellous photos**.*

*Those people are **tourists**.*

Lesson four : Prepositions

Time

In, on and at

Compare at, on and in: They arrived **at** 5 o'clock. They arrived **on** Friday. They arrived **in** October/ **in** 1998.

We use :

IN	ON	AT
In + longer periods time..) (year/month/season)	On + days/dates	At + the time of day (clock time/meal
<i>in 1988</i> <i>in September</i> <i>in winter</i> <i>in the 21st century</i>	<i>on Wednesday</i> <i>on 15 April</i> <i>on my birthday</i>	<i>at three o'clock</i> <i>at lunch (-time)/ at midnight</i> <i>at that time / at the same time /at sunset</i> <i>at the moment/at present</i>
In + a week or more	On + a single day	At + two or three days
<i>in the Easter holiday</i> <i>in the summer term</i>	<i>on Easter Monday</i> <i>on Christmas Day</i>	<i>at Easter/Christmas</i> <i>at the weekend/at weekends (US: on the weekend)</i>
In + part of day	On + day + part of day	
<i>in the morning(s)</i> <i>in the afternoon(s)</i> <i>in the evening(s)</i> <i>I'll see you in the morning.</i> <i>Do you work in the evenings?</i>	<i>on Friday morning(s)</i> <i>on Sunday afternoon(s)</i> <i>on Monday evening(s) etc</i> <i>I'll see you on Friday morning.</i> <i>Do you work on Saturday evenings?</i>	
Look at these examples with night.		
<i>I woke up in the night.</i> (= in the middle of the night)	<i>It happened on Monday night.</i>	<i>I can't sleep at night.</i> (= when it is night)

But we do not use **in, on** or **at** before **every, last, next, this, tomorrow** and **yesterday**.

We go to Greece every summer. brother came home last Christmas. I'll see you next Friday.
I leave school this year. The party is tomorrow evening. The group set off yesterday morning.

In spoken English we often **leave out 'on'** before **days** (Sunday/Monday etc.). So you can say:

I'll see you on Friday, or I'll see you Friday. I don't work on Monday mornings, or I don't work Monday mornings.

In time or on time?

On time means '**at the right time**', '**on schedule**', **punctual, not late**. If something happens on time, it happens **at the time that was planned**.

The plane took off on time. I hope the meeting starts on time. Rachel is never on time. She's always late.
The opposite of **on time** is **late**: Be on time. Don't be late.

In time (for something / to do something) means '**early enough**'/ **soon enough**/ **with enough time to do something**'

Will you be home in time for dinner? (= soon enough for dinner)
I'm in a hurry. I want to get home in time to see the game on TV. (= soon enough to see the game)

You can say **just in time** (= almost too late):

We got to the station just in time for our train.
A child ran into the road in front of the car - I managed to stop just in time.
I was about to close the door when just in time I remembered my key. (= at the last moment)
The opposite of in time is **too late**: *I got home too late to see the game on TV.*

Other uses of in

We can use **in** for the time (how long) *it takes to do or to complete something*.

*I learnt to drive in four weeks. (= it took me four weeks to learn) I did the crossword **in** five minutes.*

We can also use **in** for *a future time measured from the present*.

*Your photos will be ready **in** an hour. (= an hour from now)*

Andy has gone away. He'll be back in a week. (= a week from now)

You can also say: *in six months' time, in a week's time etc.*

*The building will open **in** six weeks/in six weeks' time.*

« At the end » and « in the end »

At the end (of something) = at the time when something ends. It refers to a point in time. For example:

at the end of the month

at the end of January

at the end of the game

at the end of the film

at the end of the course

at the end of the concert

I'm going away at the end of January / at the end of the month.

The players shook hands at the end of the game. At the end of the film we all cried.

We do not say '**in the end (of...)**' So you cannot say 'in the end of January' or 'in the end of the concert'.

The opposite of at the end (of ...) is *at the beginning (of...)*:

I'm going away at the beginning of January, (not in the beginning)

In the end = finally.

We use in the end when we say *what the final result of a situation was*(= after a lot of time, or eventually).

We had a lot of problems with our car. We sold it in the end. (= finally we sold it)

We waited for Tim for ages, and in the end we left.

The opposite of in the end is usually **at first**:

At first we didn't get on very well, but in the end we became good friends.

Place and Position

in, inside, out, outside

In describes something contained by something else. e.g. *There are some cups **in** that Cupboard.*

Inside has the same meaning but is used *for emphasis*. e. g. *Luckily there was nobody inside burning house.*

Out means '*away from the inside*' and also '*not in the place where you usually are*'.

Close the door on your way out. I'm sorry, Kate's not here right now. She's out. (= she's not at home)

Outside means *out of a particular room or building but still near it* : *Kate's outside in the garden. I'll just call her.*

Expressions with « in » : There are many expressions with **in**. This is a selection.

Countries

My parents are in Canada at the moment. (no article)

cities /towns/ villages

My sister lives in Madrid. (no article)/ *Kate lives in Oxford*

streets

Jack lives in Garden Avenue. (no article)

Roads

She was walking in the road, not on the pavement

the mirror

Tony could see his face in the mirror.

hole/crack in

There was a hole in my shoe.

Hand

Ellen had a bunch of flowers in one hand.

Armchair

She sat in an armchair.

the country

Paul and Mary live in the country, not in the city.

hospital

Sally is ill and is in hospital. (no article)

prison/jail

Keith stole Some money and ended up in prison. (no article)

bed

Mark isn't up yet. He's still in bed.

We also say that somebody/something is: *in a line/in a row/ in a queue/ in bed / in the sky/in the world / in the country/in the countryside / in an office /in a department /in a picture / in a photo/ in a photograph in a book/in a paper (= newspaper) /in a magazine /in a letter / in the rain / in the sun/ in the shade/in the dark / in bad weather / (write) in ink (in pen / in pencil)/ (write) in words (in figures / in capital letters) / (be/fall) in love (with somebody) in (my) opinion*

On

On describes *a thing touching the surface of another thing.*

Don't leave your bag on the floor. There's a photograph of London on the wall.

Expressions with « on » : There are many expressions with on. This is a selection :

Transport	There were few passengers on the plane/ bus/ train.
chair	She sat on a chair.
Television	What's on television/the radio this evening
Wall	Let's hang this picture on that wall
Injuries	Tim cut his foot on a piece of glass
Left/right	there's a cinema on the left
Side	there are small houses on this side of the street
Pavement	he was walking in the road, not on the pavement

We say that somebody/something is : *on the left / on the right on the left-hand side / on the right-hand side on the (ground floor / the first /on the second) floor etc. /on a map / on a menu / on a list /on a farm We say that a place is on a river / on a road / on the coast / on the way /on TV / on television / on the radio on the phone / (be/go) on strike / (be/go) on a diet / (be) on fire / on the whole (= in general) / on purpose (= intentionally) / (be/go) on holiday / on business / on a trip / on a tour / on a cruise etc. (You can also say 'go to a place for a holiday / for my holiday(s)')*

At : We often use 'at' to talk about *where something happens*- for example : a meeting place, a point on a journey, somebody's workplace.

I'll meet you at the cinema. We stopped for an hour at Chester. Alice works at the British Consulate.

Expressions with « at » : There are many expressions with 'at'. This is a selection.

At the beginning/the end	there's a café at the end of the street.
At the front/the back	Do you sit at the front or at the back of the class ?
At school	John isn't at school. (no article)
At university/college	Julia is studying chemistry at university.
At home	He's at home (no article)
At work	Mr King wasn't at work yesterday. (no article)
At the top(of)/at the bottom(of)/at the end (of)	Write your name at the top of the page. Jane's house is at the other end of the street.
At an event (at a party / at a conference etc.)	Were there many people at the party / at the meeting / at the wedding? I saw Steve at a conference / at a concert on Saturday.
at the station / at the airport	There's no need to meet me at the station. I can get a taxi.
at somebody's house	I was at Helen's house last night, or I was at Helen's last night
at the doctor's / at the hairdresser's	

We say that somebody is *at home* or is *home* (with or without at), but we say *do something at home* (with at):

I'll be at home all evening, or I'll be home all evening. Shall we go to a restaurant or eat at home?

At the age of ... etc. : We say at the age of 16 / at 120 miles an hour / at 100 degrees etc.:

Tracy left school at 16. or ... at the age of 16. The train was travelling at 120 miles an hour.

At, or in ?

At and in are both used to describe a person's position. At shows a general location at a point or place. In is used with the name of a container, place or area to show that someone or something is inside it. Study these examples :

There were a lot of people **in the shop**. It was very crowded.

Go along this road, then turn left **at the shop**. (somebody giving directions)

I'll meet you **in the hotel lobby**.

I'll meet you **at the entrance to the hotel**

In or at for buildings

You can often use in or at with buildings. For example, you can eat in a restaurant or at a restaurant; you can buy something in a supermarket or at a supermarket.

We usually say **at** when we say **where an event takes place** (when we are talking about **what happens there**) (for example: a concert, a film, a party, a meeting):

We went to a concert at the National Concert Hall.

The meeting took place at the company's head office in Frankfurt.

There was a robbery at the supermarket.

We use **in** when we are thinking about **the building itself**. (to mean **inside** a building) Compare:

We had dinner at the hotel.

All the rooms in the hotel have air conditioning.
(not at the hotel)

I was at Helen's (house) last night.

It's always cold in Helen's house. The heating doesn't work well, (not at Helen's house)

In and at for towns etc.

We normally use **in** with *cities, towns and villages*:

The Louvre is a famous art museum in Paris. (not at Paris)

Sam's parents live in a village in the south of France. (not at a village)

We use **at** when we think of the place *as a point or station on a journey*:

Does this train stop at Oxford? (= at Oxford station)

In or on ?

On a bus / in a car etc.

We usually say **on** a *bus / on a train / on a plane / on a ship* but **in** a *car / in a taxi* :

The bus was very full. There were too many people on it.

Laura arrived in a taxi.

We say **on** a *bike (= bicycle) / on a motorbike / on a horse*: Jane passed me on her bike.

Clothes and jewellery

Remember : people are **in** clothes, and jewellery is **on** people

Who's the man in the dark coat ?

She's got three lovely bracelets on her arm.

In, on or at ?

in the front / in the back of a car

I was sitting in the back (of the car) when we crashed.

at the front / at the back of a **building / theatre / group of people** etc.

The garden is at the back of the house. Let's sit at the front (of the cinema).

We were at the back, so we couldn't see very well.

on the front / on the back of a **letter / piece of paper** etc.

I wrote the date on the back of the photo.

2/ in the corner of a room

The TV is in the corner of the room.

BUT

at at the corner or on the corner of a street

J T *There is a small shop at/on the corner of the street*

To

To is used with verbs of motion. We say go/come/travel (etc.) to a place or event. For example :

go to China, go to bed, come to my house, go back to Italy, go to the bank, be taken to hospital, return to London, go to a concert, be sent to prison, welcome somebody to a place, drive to the airport.

Last night we went to the cinema.

Could you take this letter to the post office ?

I sent a parcel to my sister.

In the same way we say '*a journey to / a trip to / a visit to / on my way to* .

Did you enjoy your trip to Paris / your visit to the zoo?

We say *been to a place or an event*:

I've been to Italy four times, but I've never been to Rome. Amanda has never been to a football match in her life.

Compare **to** (for movement) and **in/at** (for position):

They are going **to** France, but They live **in** France. Can you come **to** the party? but I'll see you **at** the party.

Get and arrive

We say *get to a place*: e.g. What time did they get to London / to work / to the hotel?

But we say *arrive in ... or arrive at ...* (not arrive to).

We say arrive *in a town, city or country*: e.g. They arrived in London / in Spain a week ago.

For other *places (buildings etc.) or events*, we say arrive **at**:

When did they arrive at the hotel / at the airport / at the party?

Home

We say go home / come home / get home / arrive home / on the way home etc. (no preposition).

We do not say 'to home':

I'm tired. Let's go home now. (not go to home) I met Lisa on my way home, (not my way to home)

Into

Go into, get into ... etc. = *enter* (a room / a building / a car etc.):

I opened the door, went into the room and sat down. A bird flew into the kitchen through the window.

Every month, my salary is paid directly into my bank account.

With some verbs (especially **go/get/put**) we often use **in** (instead of into):

She got in the car and drove away, (or She got into the car...)

I read the letter and put it back in the envelope.

The opposite of into is **out of**: e.g. *She got out of the car and went into a shop.*

We usually say '*get on/off a bus / a train / a plane*' (not usually into/out of):

She got on the bus and I never saw her again.

Above/below/ over/ under

Above/below mean '*higher/lower than*'. They can be used without an object.

You can see the top of the tower above the trees From the mountain, I could see the lake below.

Over/under mean '*directly above/below*'. They both need an object.

The alien spaceship hovered over the building.

I keep my suitcase under my bed.

Over can also be used like '*across*' or '*covering*'.

There is a footbridge over the motorway. (across) There was a plastic sheet over the hole in the roof. (covering)

Next to/ beside/ near/ by

Next to and **beside** mean '*exactly at the side of*'. **Beside** can be more formal.

Maria sits next to Paula.

Come and sit beside me on the sofa.

Near means '*close to*'.

Tom's house is near the sports centre. We had a holiday near the sea. (close to the sea - a few kilometres away)

By

We use **by** in many expressions to say *how we do something*. For example, you can:

send something by post, contact somebody by phone / by email, do something by hand, pay by credit card / by cheque.

Can I pay by credit card? You can contact me by phone or by email.

But we say *pay cash* or *pay in cash* (not usually by cash).

We also say that something happens *by mistake / by accident / by chance*:

We hadn't arranged to meet. We met by chance.

But we say '*do something on purpose*' (= you mean to do it):

I didn't do it on purpose. It was an accident.

Note that we say *by chance, by credit card* etc. (not by the chance / by a credit card). In these expressions we use **by + noun without the or a**.

In the same way we use **by ...** to say *how somebody travels*: by car / by train / by plane / by boat / by ship / by bus / by bike etc. by road / by rail / by air / by sea.

Jess usually goes to work by bus.

But we say **on foot**: *Did you come here by car or on foot?*

You cannot use **by** if you say *my car / the train / a taxi* etc. We say:

by car but in my car (not by my car)

by train but on the train (not by the train)

We say that '*something is done by somebody/something*' (*passive*):

Have you ever been bitten by a dog? The programme was watched by millions of people.

Compare by and with:

The door must have been opened with a key. (not by a key) (= somebody used a key to open it)

The door must have been opened by somebody with a key.

We say '*a play by Shakespeare*' / '*a painting by Rembrandt*' / '*a novel by Tolstoy*' etc.

Have you read anything by Ernest Hemingway?

By also means '*next to / beside / at the side of*' and is often used in descriptions of rooms.

There was a table by the window.

He was standing by the door.

'Where's the light switch?' 'By the door.'

Come and sit by me. (= next to me)

Note the following use of **by**:

Clare's salary has just gone up from £2,500 a month to £2,750. So it has increased by £250 / by ten per cent.

Carl and Mike had a race over 200 metres. Carl won by about three metres.

Opposite

opposite means '*exactly on the other side of*' a space.

There is a baker opposite our house.