

**Technical English for Engineers**  
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**Lecture - 09**  
**Articles**

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So, in our day-to-day life, we keep using various parts of speech and you have already seen, what are these different types of parts of speech; noun, pronouns, verb, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions. We have been and we will be talking about these elements of words and sentences very frequently in this course. Now, a major area of grammar and in an English grammar is articles. There are three major articles are that only three known articles in the English language 'a' and 'the'; 'a' and 'an' are called indefinite articles, whereas 'the' is definite article. Now, what does an article do? An article has a very important place in written and in spoken English. We do not realize it, but very often especially those whose mother tongue is not English or whose first language is not English, they often make mistakes in the use of articles and tenses. Articles are a major area of frequently making mistakes.

So, what is an article, article is a word which is almost like an adjective; it defines or modifies a noun it is placed before a noun always, so that is one key feature of an article. However, we have to always like in any other part of grammar, in any other feature of

language, we have to be very careful about every rule. Now, usually adjectives as we know modify nouns through description, but articles are used instead to point out or refer to nouns. Now, this is not to be confused with the demonstrative this or that, they are also pointers or they too refers to these books, this table, that microphone, that is also used, but those are demonstratives. Here we are talking about articles which are use to point out or refer to nouns.

Now definite articles, first let us talk about 'the', which is a definite article and it refers directly to a specific noun or group of nouns. For example, the alligator in the lake, we are talking about a specific alligator in a specific lake here. Let us say there are many alligators in that lake. So, here we are not pointing towards one definite alligator, but here for some reason, we might be very specific about this particular alligator, therefore, it becomes the alligator see pronunciation matter. So, whenever we use the article 'the' before any word that start with the vowels; a, e, i, o, u. So, the pronunciation becomes 'the' or it is otherwise, there is a stronger emphasis 'the' these are certain know answers which will serve you well, if you keep make a note of these.

Let us say the president of the United State of America, so, the president of the United State of America. So, again we are talking about a specific person. The captain of the ship, we are talking about 'the' a very specific person, captain a hub, the captain of the ship pea coat. So, we are talking about a very specific person. Now each noun, a group of noun being refer to is direct and is specific. Therefore, what qualifies them a specific or a definite article 'the'. Definite article is used with singular or plural nouns when you expect the person who is listening to know which person or thing is talked about, this is important. The person should know which person or the listener should know which person or thing or the reader should know which person or thing is specifically being talked about.

This is the girl, I told you about; this is the girl; I am not taking about any girls. So, this is the girl I talk. This is the element, which when mixed with some other element results in this product. This is the film I told you about; this is the film I told you about. So, we are talking about something in specific let us go to a movie tonight, but this is the movie, I wanted to watch for a longtime. So, there is a difference, any. Let us go to a movie, any

movie would do I will make I look at the newspaper and I will see what is running in town and I will go for it. But this is the movie I want to watch. So, this is important.

This is the book, I told you about. I told you about this book 'The Advance Learners Dictionary'. So, this is the book I told you about, so a specific. Read a dictionary, any dictionary would do, read did you get the dictionary today, so you know that I am talking about a specific dictionary. So, therefore, it is important that the listener or reader should know which person or thing is being specifically talked about. This is the experiment, which went wrong.

Now, definite article is generally used with certain proper nouns also for example, the names of rivers, oceans, mountain ranges, deserts, islands, so the Andaman and Nicobar, the Indian ocean, the Pacific, the Gobi desert. So, this is the way the United States of America - group of states coming together, the United Kingdom, but we do not say I went to the England, but we say I am going to the UK that is we do not say I am going to the India, but the Indian ocean, because traditionally they are specific. The definite article is used before the names of ocean, rivers, the Ganges, the Jamuna river, so this is the way we use.

Now indefinite articles are the words 'a' and 'an', we have already seen here, and each of these articles is used to refer to a noun which is not so specific, so not as specific as the definite article 'the'. An angry man, a war hero - my father was a war hero; an idea can change the world, an idea; my friend is an engineer. So, we are talking about, so these are articles used to refer to a noun which is not specific in each case the noun is not specific other people do not know who you are referring to. An angry man, a war hero by themselves is not very specific when we use the indefinite articles.

If the noun as I have already told you about if comes after the article with begins with the vowel sound a, e, i, o, u, the appropriate indefinite article 'an' not 'a'. A vowel sound is a sound that is created by any vowel in the English language. So, remember a, e, i, o, u and you have to, but we do not say there is an exception, we do not say an university although it begins with the letter say vowel u, but the pronunciation is we say an umbrella, so 'a' sound. But when it is a 'u' sound, we do not use; although there may be a vowel.

So, therefore, it is always a university, and not an university. If the noun that comes after the article begins with the consonant sounds, see all those alphabets those sounds which are not vowels, they are consonants. So, they are appropriate indefinite article is 'a'. In definite article is used when talking about a type or class of people or things. He is a doctor, so we are mentioning a class or a profession. She is a student; he is a technician, but she is the student of the year in case, so then becomes very specific.

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## Exercise #1

- Identify and name the type of the article(s) in the following sentences.
  - I am going to the hospital to visit a friend who is undergoing operation.
  - She took a book out of the shelf and started reading.
  - An honest man is needed to complete this task.
  - Man is a social being.

Now, look at this slide and this exercise. Identify and name the type of the article(s) in the sentences that are given below. Now, go through these sentences and then we will work them out. I am going to the hospital to visit a friend who is undergoing operation. She took a book out of the shelf and started reading. An honest man is needed to complete this task. Man is a social being. Now see last sentence, man is a social being is a universal truth. So, therefore, we do not say man is the social being. So, 'a' is required here. An honest man is needed any a man, but an honest man we are not talking about someone very is specific, he is the honest man I am talking about if we were talking in that context then it changes, so an honest man. And remember, we do not, because honest at a silent therefore, an honest man, we do not pronounce the alphabet or sound h here. So, it is an honest.

Therefore, the article 'an' although the word begins with a consonant and not a vowel. She took a book, now any book is book ok; she took a book, we do not know which book we are here is being talked about, but she took out the book that I was telling you about then it become a specific. I am going to the hospital and visit a friend who is undergoing operation. The implication is that the listener does not know which friend I am going to the hospital. The hospital is quite a specific, because the friend who is going to be operated is in a definite hospital, specific hospital.

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## Exercise #2

- Fill in the blanks with the suitable article.
  - He won \_\_\_ gold medal in \_\_\_ international debate competition.
  - We lost \_\_\_ bet.
  - I am going to open \_\_\_ café.
  - Can you pass me \_\_\_ book?
  - Is that \_\_\_ new song you are listening to?

Now, look at this second slide, exercise to fill in the blanks with the suitable article. First sentence, he won dash gold medal dash international debate competition. We lost dash bet. I am going to open dash café. Can you pass me dash book? Is that dash new song you are listening to? Now, what do we fill in here? Let us solve it together; he won a gold medal in the international debate competition. Here we are talking about a specific debate competition. We lost the bet; it cannot be we lost a bet, there was a specific bet which these people lost. I am going to open a café, what kind of café, we do not know, but a café. Can you pass me the book? Now, he is taking about a very specific book or thing right the book? So, therefore, now can you pass we a book, I will give you any book you ask can you pass me the book, I will have to give you one specific book that

you are particularly referring to. Is that the new song you are listening to or everyone is listening to? So, it becomes a song which is in the, in song that everyone is listening to.

Another rule, which concerns articles, is the no article rule. Now we do not use an article with uncountable nouns. Let say let us take for example, oil, water, salt, sugar we cannot really count the one, two, three, four. So, we do not use articles with these words. We also do not use articles with countable nouns in the plural when talking in general terms. So, when I say I love maths, maths as a subject. So, I do not say a maths, so the maths. Doctors well paid in that company. So, we do not say 'a', 'the' doctors, we are talking about doctors in general; doctors well paid in that hospital or that country, we are talking about doctors in general, not a specific doctor. Sugar is sweet, so salt is salty; we do not say the sugar or the salt.

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## Centre Pompidou

- In 1971 a competition for this new cultural center attracted 650 entries. **The** winning project, submitted by **the** architects Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano and Gianfranco Franchini broke with architectural conventions by moving functional elements such as escalators, water pipes and air conditioning to **the** outside of **the** building, freeing interior space for **the** display of art works. **The** pipes and ducts are all color-coded: blue for air, green for water, red for elevators, yellow for electricity, gray for corridors and white for **the** building itself.

Look at this particular slide and some of you would be interested in the topic that I am going to give you in this particular exercise. I have highlighted all the articles for your reference. Let us look at this and I read it aloud for you.

In 1971 a competition for this new cultural center attracted 650 entries. Now the central idea of this passage, lengthy passages is the centre Pompidou, it is an important building

in Paris. Let us go back to our slide, in 1971 a competition for this new cultural center attracted 650 entries. The winning project, submitted by the architects Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, and Gianfranco Franchini broke with architectural conventions by moving functional elements such as escalators, water pipes and air conditioning to the outside of the building, freeing interior space for the display of art works.

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- The construction of **the** glass and metal building in **the** centrally located Beaubourg neighborhood ran into a lot of opposition from people who disliked **the** idea of an 'oil refinery' in **a** historic district. But when **the** museum opened in December 1977, it became **an** instant success: originally designed to accommodate some 5,000 visitors per day, **the** Centre Pompidou has been welcoming over 25,000 visitors per day making it one of **the** most visited attractions in Paris.

So, the construction of the glass and metal building in the centrally located Beaubourg neighborhood ran to a lot of opposition, I have not highlighted 'a', but please highlight it, 'a' is also an article here, opposition from people who disliked the idea of an again not highlighted, but please do it an 'oil refinery' in a historic district. But when the museum opened in December 1977, it became an instant success: originally designed to accommodate some 5,000 visitors per day, the centre Pompidou has been welcoming over 25,000 visitors per day.

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**The** Centre Pompidou is home to one of **the** world's most important museums of modern art, the MNAM, but it also contains **a** very popular library, **a** bookshop, **a** movie theater and a panoramic terrace. **The** Public Information Library or BPI boasts **a** collection of 450,000 books, 2,600 magazines and **a** large number of new media items.

Now, you go on to the next slide and what do we find. The Centre Pompidou is home to one of the world's most important museums of modern art, the MNAM, important abbreviation therefore, and very specific therefore, definite article 'the', but it also contains a very popular library, a bookshop, a movie theater and a panoramic terrace. The public information library or BPI boasts a collection of so many books 2,600 magazines and a large number of new media items. Now, very interesting piece of art, work of art and very interesting passage. So, you just follow the kind of articles which are used here, and in what connection. And you do some of your own self reading, you look at the advance learners dictionary book, you will come across how these articles are used in various places. For more explanation, for more details, you can also look at that and of course, there is also certain standard grammar books that you can always refer to.



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- **The** library occupies the first three floors of the building, while **the** museum's permanent collection is located on floors 4 and 5. **The** first and top floor are used for large expositions. **The** museum has one of **the** most important collections of modern art. Its more than 59,000 works cover a broad spectrum of twentieth-century arts.

We will continue with the slide, and look at it. The library occupies the first three floors of the building, while the museum's permanent collection is located on floors 4th and 5th. The first and top floor are used for large expositions. We never say a first and top floor, it is always the top floor, the first. The museum has one of the most important collections of modern art. Its more than 59,000 works cover a broad spectrum of twentieth-century arts.

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## Exercise

- Sydney Opera House is .... masterpiece of late modern architecture. It is admired internationally and proudly treasured by .... people of Australia. It was created by .... young architect who understood and recognised ....potential provided by the site against .....stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour. Danish architect Jørn Utzon gave Australia .... challenging, graceful piece of urban sculpture in patterned tiles, glistening in ....sunlight and invitingly aglow at night. In its short lifetime, Sydney Opera House has earned ..... reputation as ..... world-class performing arts centre and become ..... symbol of both Sydney and .....Australian nation.

Now, here is an exercise, I would like you to take a good look at it and work it out. I will read out for you, and then this is something that you have to fill in the blanks yourself. We will solve the exercise once you finish it. This is a Sydney opera house.

Sydney opera house is dash masterpiece of late modern architecture. It is admired internationally and proudly treasured by dash people of Australia. It was created by dash young architect who understood and recognized dash potential provided by the site against dash stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour. Danish architect Jorn Utzon gave Australia challenging, graceful piece of urban sculpture in patterned tiles, glistening in dash sunlight and invitingly aglow at night. In its short lifetime, Sydney Opera House has earned dash reputation as dash world-class performing arts centre and become dash symbol of both Sydney and dash Australian nation.

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- ..... distinctive roof comprises sets of interlocking vaulted 'shells' set upon ..... vast terraced platform and surrounded by terrace areas that function as pedestrian concourses. .... two main halls are arranged side by side, with their long axes, slightly inclined from each other. .... auditoria face south, away from ..... harbour with the stages located between .....audience and ..... city.

And dash distinctive roof comprises sets of interlocking vaulted 'shells' set upon dash vast terraced platform and surrounded by terrace areas that function as pedestrian concourses dash two main halls are arranged side by side, with their long axes, slightly inclined from each other. Dash auditoria face south, away from dash harbour with the stages located between dash audience and dash city. Now, look at the exercise and solve it.

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- Sydney Opera House is a masterpiece of late modern architecture. It is admired internationally and proudly treasured by the people of Australia. It was created by a young architect who understood and recognised the potential provided by the site against the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour. Danish architect Jørn Utzon gave Australia a challenging, graceful piece of urban sculpture in patterned tiles, glistening in the sunlight and invitingly aglow at night. In its short lifetime, Sydney Opera House has earned a reputation as a world-class performing arts centre and become a symbol of both Sydney and the Australian nation. The distinctive roof comprises sets of interlocking vaulted 'shells' set upon a vast terraced platform and surrounded by terrace areas that function as pedestrian concourses. The two main halls are arranged side by side, with their long axes, slightly inclined from each other, generally running north-south. The auditoria face south, away from the harbour with the stages located between the audience and the city.

So, let me read out the exercise, and the paragraph has solved. Now, Sydney Opera House is a masterpiece of late modern architecture. It is admired internationally and proudly treasured by the people of Australia. It was created by a young architect who understood and recognized the potential provided by the site against the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour. See wherever it is very specific and definite, you are using the definite article 'the'. Danish architect Jorn Utzon gave Australia a challenging, graceful piece of urban sculpture in patterned tiles, glistening in the sunlight and invitingly aglow at night. Please look at the slide. In its short lifetime, Sydney Opera House has earned a reputation as a world-class performing arts centre and become a symbol of both Sydney and the Australian nation. It cannot be an Australian nation. The distinctive roof comprises sets of interlocking vaulted 'shells' set upon a vast terraced platform and surrounded by terrace areas that function as pedestrian concourses. The two main halls are arranged side by side, with their long axes, slightly inclined from each other, generally running north to south. The auditoria face south, away from the harbour with the stages located between the audience and the city.

So, this is the way you have to solve the articles and I hope that you are going to go home today, and you are going to learn more about the articles. Even if you look up the

internet, the plenty of sites, which talk in detail about the use of articles a very common area where many students make mistakes.

So, thank you very much, and we will meet for our next class.