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**Articles: Overview**

**The aim of this resource is to:**

* **introduce you to articles.**
* **show you how articles are used in sentences.**

**What are Articles?**

* Words or phrases that come at the beginning of a noun phrase telling us whether the information is new or familiar.
* They also tell us something about quantity.

**Categories of Articles**

* Indefinite article: *a* and *an*
* Definite article: *the*

Note: We use the term **‘zero article or *[]*’** for instances where the article is left out.

**Idioms and other Fixed Expressions**

* In a lot of idiomatic expressions, articles are used or left out for no apparent reasons other than they belong or don’t belong in the expressions.
* In these instances, learners have to remember the whole phrase, ignoring general rules or sub-rules.

**Example**

**a** bit of in **a** hurry make **a** start have **a** drink

on **the** coast in **the** pink off **the** record do **a** turn

go to **the** wall play **the** blues through **the** nose

in ***[]***  debt on ***[]*** loan out of ***[]***  action

**Where do articles appear in sentences?**

* Articles are part of noun phrases and come
  + at the beginning, either immediately before a noun or an adjective.
  + before a combination of adverb, adjective and noun.

**Example**

I heard **a** noise. (noun)

I heard **an** eerie noise. (adjective + noun)

I heard **the** strangely muffled noise. (adverb + adjective + noun).

**How do we choose articles?**

* The kind of noun that follows the article affects our choice.
* We can leave out articles before:
  + plural nouns: *[]* ***Dreams*** *often come true*.
  + uncountable nouns: *Give me []* ***money****.*
* An article is only left out before a singular noun if it is replaced with another determiner:
  + possessive adjectives: ***her*** *brother*.
  + demonstrative adjectives: ***that*** *book.*
  + many quantifiers: ***any*** *occasion,* ***each*** *day.*

**Example**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Singular nouns** | **Plural nouns** | **Uncountable nouns** |
| a/an | ***a*** book | - | - |
| no article | - | **[]** books | **[]** rice |
| the | ***the*** book | **the** books | **the** rice |

**Source adapted from: Parrott, M 2010, *Grammar for English language teachers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge**

**Activity 1**

**In the following text, the numbers indicate where articles have been used or left out. For each number explain the use (or non-use) of the article.**

Although **[] (1)** social work involves **a (2)** great deal more than interviewing, social workers spend more time in interviewing than in any other single activity. It is **the (3)** most important and most frequently used social work skill. This is most clearly true for the direct service worker. But **the (4)** group worker and community organizer also frequently participate in **[] (5)** interviewing. **The (6)** human service literature describes **the (7)** interview as "the (6) most pervasive basic social work skill," as **a (8)** "fundamental social work activity," and as "a primary social work tool-in-trade." The interview is **the (9)** context through which social workers offer and implement most human services. **The (10)** interview is the primary instrument they use to obtain an understanding of clients and their situation and for helping clients deal with their problem.

**Source adapted from: Kadushin, A & Kadushin, G 1997, *The Social Work Interview: a guide for human service professionals*, Columbia University Press. New York.**

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