**Special difficulties in the use of articles**

**Articles with names of seasons**

**Names of seasons** (winter, spring, summer, autumn and AmE fall) are *mostly used without any articles though the definite article may be found even in general statements*: In London there are certain afternoons in (the) winter when the clouds hang heavy and low. In (the) summer I liked to sit on one of those convenient benches on the sea-front,

Note. The definite article is usually used in the prepositional phrase ‘**in the fall**’ (AmE).

However, **names of seasons are used without any article in the function of a predicative**: It was spring and the air was pleasant. It was not summer yet, but the sea was already warm.

*If names of seasons are modified by limiting attributes or limitation is clear from the context or situation*, **the definite article is used**: It was the autumn of 1942, and most men in London were in military uniforms.

*The definite article is also obligatory* after the prepositions ‘**during**’, ‘**for**’, ‘**through**’: The family moved to the country for the winter. During the autumn he often came to see me in my office and one day asked me for a job.

*When names of seasons are modified by descriptive attributes* **they take the indefinite article**: It was a warm summer and the lodging houses were full in Elsom. It was a rainy autumn.

However, when names of seasons are modified by the adjectives ‘**late**’ or ‘**early**’, *there is no article*: It was late autumn. It is early spring.

**Articles with names of times of the day and night**

This semantic group includes the following nouns: ‘*day*’, ‘*night*’, ‘*evening*’, ‘*morning*’, ‘*noon*’, ‘*afternoon*’, ‘*dusk*’, ‘*twilight*’, ‘*midnight*’, ‘*nightfall*’, ‘*daytime*’, ‘*sunrise*’, ‘*sunset*’.

**Names of times of the day and night are used without any article in the following cases**:

− *when they denote ‘light’ or ‘darkness’*: Dusk fell without my noticing it.

− after the prepositions ‘*at*’, ‘*after*’, ‘*before*’, ‘*by*’, ‘*till*’, ‘*until*’, ‘*towards*’, ‘*past*’ (**at night, by evening, past midnight, at dawn, at dusk, before noon, till morning, until midnight**, etc.);

− *in the function of a predicative*: It was dusk, but the men were still at sea.

− *when these nouns are modified by nouns denoting days of the week or the words ‘yesterday’ or ‘tomorrow’*: He was the man who had sat on the Carlton terrace on Thursday afternoon. We’ll meet tomorrow morning.

− in the combinations of adverbial character ‘**all day (long)**’, ‘**all night (long)**’, ‘**day after day**’, ‘**day in day out**’, ‘**from morning till night**’, ‘**night after night**’, ‘**day and night**’, ‘**night and day**’, ‘**from day to day**’.

Names of times of the day and night are used with the indefinite article if they are modified by descriptive attribufes: He told me how the sun set there on a spring afternoon. It was a frosty night.

If these nouns are modified by the adjectives ‘**late**’ or ‘**early**’, there is no article: It was early morning.

Nouns denoting times of the day and night are used with the definite article in the following cases:

− *when a specific night or day, etc. is meant* (the limitation is mostly clear from the context or situation; sometimes a limiting attribute is used): The rain had stopped and the night was starry. The morning of his departure was raw and he was wearing a greatcoat.

− *when these nouns are used in a generic sense*: He spent the morning working at his novel and the afternoon walking in the fields.

− *after the prepositions ‘in’, ‘during’ and ‘through’* (**in the morning, in the night, in the evening, in the daytime, in the afternoon, during the night, during the day, through the night, through the day**);

Note. After the preposition ‘**for**’ both the definite and indefinite articles are possible depending on the meaning: I trust go to Sheffield for the day (the day is specified). I must go to Sheffield for a day (for one day; it is not specified which day it is).

− *when these nouns are preceded by the pronoun ‘other’*: I met Jones in Oxford Street the other day.

**Articles with names of meals**

**Names of meals** (breakfast, lunch, luncheon, dinner, supper, tea, high / meat tea) *are generally used without any article*: Dinner that evening was not a success.

The definite or the indefinite article is used when a special meal is meant.

*We find the definite article when names of meals are modified by a limiting attribute or limitation is clear from the context or the situation*: ‘Do you remember the breakfast in the park?’ Susan asked.

*The indefinite article is used when names of meals are modified by descriptive attributes*: I knew few of the guests and my heart sank as I saw myself laborously making conversation through a long dinner with two total strangers.

**Names of meals** may be used in a specialized sense, **denoting portions of food served at restaurants, cafes**, etc. *In this case they are used as countable nouns and follow the rules of the use of articles for countable nouns*: ‘Your companion has already paid for two lunches, sir’, said the waiter. In this hotel you pay for a room and a breakfast.

**Articles with names of diseases**

Names of diseases usually take no article though some of them may be used with the definite article, e.g. **(the) flu, (the) measles, (the) mumps, influenza, scarlet fever, bronchitis, diabetes, cholera, diphtheria, cancer, tuberculosis (consumption), appendicitis, the plague**, etc.:

The definite article is found with names of diseases when the speaker refers to some particular case: ‘What has happened to your friend?’ he asked. I told him about the bronchitis.

Also mark the following expressions used in everyday life:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| to have | a headache  toothache  stomachache  backache  earache  a pain in the back, in the knee, etc. heart trouble, liver trouble  a high blood pressure  a cold  a cough  a heart attack  a sore throat |

Note. The noun ‘heartache’ is used figuratively denoting deep sorrow or grief.

**Articles with the noun ‘sea’**

**The noun ‘sea’ is generally used with the definite article**: The sea was calm within the reef.

The noun sea is used with the zero article in the adverbial expressions ‘**be at sea**’ and ‘**go to sea**’: He went to sea when he was a boy of thirteen.

The noun ‘sea’ may be used with the indefinite article in descriptions if it has a descriptive attribute: The next day everything changed. We saw a blue sparkling sea dotted with white sails.

**Use of articles with nouns *school, prison, hospital, university, church, bed, work, home, sea***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Alison is ten years old. Every day she goes to school. She’s at school now. School begins at 9 and finishes at 3. | Today Alison’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. |
| Ken’s brother is in prison for robbery. | Ken went to the prison to visit his brother. |
| Jack had an accident last week. He was taken to hospital. He’s still in hospital now. | Jill has gone to the hospital to visit Jack. She’s at the hospital now. |
| When I leave school, I want to go to university. | Excuse me, where is the university, please? |
| Mrs. Kelly goes to church every Sunday. | The workmen went to the church to repair the roof. |
| It’s time to go to bed now.  This morning I had breakfast in bed. | I sat down on the bed. |
| Ann didn’t go to work yesterday.  What time do you usually finish work? | This is the work of a friend of mine. |
| It’s late. Let’s go home.  Will you be at home tomorrow afternoon? | He came back to the family home. |
| Keith is a seaman. He spends most of his life at sea. | I’d like to live near the sea.  It can be dangerous to swim in the sea. |

**Articles with the noun ‘society’**

The noun ‘*society*’ is used **without any article** when it means ‘*an organized community people live in*’: ‘He is a forger. He ought to be hounded out of civilized society’, Mr. Warton said.

In other meanings it may be used with the definite and the indefinite article: They decided to organize, a cooperative society. It was but natural that he preferred the society of his friends, but his parents did not understand this.

**Articles with the noun ‘town’**

The noun ‘*town*’ **takes no article when it is used in contrast with** ‘*country*’ or when it means the business centre of a town, e.g. ‘*to be in town*’, ‘*to go to town*’, ‘*to live in town*’, ‘*to come back (to return) to town*’, ‘*to stay in town*’, ‘*to leave town*’, ‘*to be out of town*’, etc.: She was sitting on the porch waiting for her husband to come from town.

In other cases the noun town is used with the definite or the indefinite article: It was a small town in Shropshire.

Note. The noun ‘*country*’ **as an antonym** to ‘*town*’ **takes the definite article** (*to go the country, to be in the country, to come from the country*): It is pleasant to spend the summer in the country.

**Articles with the nouns ‘radio’ and ‘television’**

The nouns ‘radio’ and ‘television’ take no article: Is it a play for television or radio?

The noun ‘**radio**’ *is used with the definite article in combination with the verbs* ‘**to listen**’, ‘**to hear**’: I’ve heard an interesting piece of news on the radio.

Note. We must say ‘**to watch television (TV)**’, ‘**to see on television**’, ‘**to show on television**’: Did you watch television yesterday?

**Articles with nouns in some common expressions**

*Names of musical instruments are used with the definite article when we speak about them in a general way*: He plays the piano well. I’d like to learn the guitar.

*When these nouns have a concrete meaning they may be used with the definite and the indefinite article or without any article*: He made up his mind to buy a piano. You must have the violin repaired. There were two grand pianos on, the stage.

Nouns denoting means of transport take no article when they are used with the preposition ‘by’:

*to go / come/ leave / travel* **by** *train, plane, boat, bus, bicycle, coach*

Note. In other expressions articles must be used: **to take the (a) train, to catch the (a) train, to miss the train, to be on the bus, to sit on the bicycle, to sleep in the train**, etc.

In other by-phrases expressing manner or instrument nouns take no article either: **by air, by land, by post, by mail, by phone, by telegraph, by hand, by accident, by sight, by chance, by mistake** etc.

Nouns of various meanings are used without any article in adverbial prepositional phrases such as ‘**in detail**’, ‘**in person**’, ‘**at hand**’, ‘**on deck**’, ‘**on foot**’, ‘**on leave**’, ‘**on holiday**’, ‘**on vacation**’, etc.

The definite article is usually used with the expressions ‘**to go to (to be at) the cinema / the theatre**’, ‘**to be on at the cinema, the pictures**’: When did you go to the cinema last?

Occasionally the indefinite article may be found with these nouns: I persuaded Jim to go to a theatre. Let’s go to a cinema.

Note. When ‘cinema’ and ‘theatre’ denote buildings in which films or plays are shown they follow the general rules of the use of articles for countable nouns: There are three cinemas in the town. The theatre was built in the 19th century.

There is usually no article in of-phrases after the words ‘**post**’, ‘**office**’, ‘**title**’, ‘**rank**’, ‘**degree**’: He received the degree of Doctor of Law two years ago. The position of governess did not suit her.

**Names of games** *are used with the zero article in combination with the verb* ‘to play’ (to play tennis, cricket, hockey, cards, billiards, etc.): He learned to play tennis at the age of six.

**Place of articles**

The articles being determiners normally come at the beginning of a noun phrase. Nevertheless, there are several groups of modifiers which are placed before the articles:

1) Nouns with the definite article follow ‘**all**’, ‘**both**’ and ‘**half**’: There was so much crackling noise in the head-set earphone that all the words sounded alike. Both the girls were rosy-cheeked and plump like their mother.

*The definite article after ‘both’ is not obligatory* and can be dropped: Both men wore conservative business suits.

‘**All**’ can precede nouns with the zero article if these nouns do not need an article in accordance with the rules: All children like sweets. (Compare with: All the children in the room looked at Santa Claus.)

Note 1. **The definite article is not used if ‘all’ is followed by a numeral**: All three boys were good at tennis.

**When ‘all’ is followed by the preposition of the definite article is used before a numeral**. This construction is preferred in AmE: All of the three boys were good at tennis.

Note 2. The indefinite article is used after ‘half’ in ‘**half an hour**’, ‘**half a day**’, ‘**half a mile**’, etc. (or a half-hour, a half-day, a half mile, etc.): It took her half an hour to learn the rules.

2) Nouns modified by articles are preceded by ‘**double**’, ‘**once**’, ‘**twice**’. The following patterns are possible:

a) *double + a noun with the definite article*: This was double the price he had been offered before;

b) *once + a noun with the indefinite article*: The clerk told her that she would have to send the rent check *once a month*.

c) *twice + a noun with the definite or the indefinite article*: Twice a month he put on his best suit and went to the club.

3) The fractions ‘one-third’, ‘three-quarters’, etc. come before nouns with the definite article: He did only one-third of the work.

4) Nouns with the indefinite article follow **‘such’** and the **exclamatory ‘what**’: His singing received such an encouraging cheer from the crowd in the street!

5) Nouns with the indefinite article are used after ‘**quite**’ and ‘**rather**’: It’s quite a long story and not a nice one. He was rather a curious man to look at.

6) Nouns with the indefinite article follow ‘**many**’ (***the verb is used in the singular***): Many a true word is spoken in jest.

7) ‘**So**’, ‘**as**’, ‘**too**’, ‘**how**’, ‘**however**’ followed by an adjective precede nouns with the indefinite article: Youth lasts so short a time. ‘How honest a man is he?’ the captain asked.

**Use of articles with proper nouns**

**Articles with personal names**

*Personal names are used without any article*: ‘Do you know Turner?’ said Burton as I nodded a greeting.

Note. Some common names (**mother, father, aunt, uncle, nurse, cook, sister, brother, cousin, baby***) are treated as proper nouns* and, therefore, take no article when they are used by members of the family or by close friends (i.e. when they mean ‘our father’, ‘our nurse’, etc.): ‘Father wants us to move into a smaller place’, Mike said. Note that these nouns are spelled with a capital letter, which shows that they are regarded as proper nouns.

However, under certain conditions personal names are used with the definite or the indefinite article.

The definite article with personal names is found in the following cases:

1) *The definite article is used when a personal name has the plural form to indicate a whole family*: One June evening I went to dine with the Macdonalds.

2) *Personal nouns modified by adjectives take the definite article*: ‘I am the celebrated Mortimer Ellis’, he said.

*Occasionally a noun modified by an adjective conveys the most important part of the communication*: then it is used with the indefinite article. *The adjective usually denotes the mood of the person described*: The dinner was served by a silent Mrs. Keats.

**There is no article before personal names modified by the adjectives ‘old’, ‘young’, ‘dear’, ‘poor’, ‘little’, ‘tiny’, ‘honest’**: Little Lynette wanted to play with the cat and I left her in the garden. Old Anthony met us at the station.

3) *The definite article is found with personal nouns modified by limiting attributes* (mostly postpositional phrases): She was not the Mary of our youth.

The indefinite article occurs in the following cases:

1) A personal name is used with the indefinite article to indicate a) *a member of a family*, b) *one resembling somebody*: ‘The boy is a Benbowl’, he replied hotly. His face always reminded Michael of a Lincoln grown old.

2) *A personal name has the indefinite article if it is modified by the adjective ‘certain’*: Last night I found a gentleman waiting to see me when I returned home – a certain George Reed (someone who called himself George Reed).

Note. If a personal name is preceded by a title (*Mr., Miss, Colonel, Sir*, etc.), the indefinite article before. It is equivalent to ‘certain’: He was engaged to be married to a Miss Smith.

**Personal names turn into common nouns when they denote things associated with the names of the certain persons**. Such nouns follow the general rules of the use of articles for common nouns: ‘Has the museum a Millais?’ I asked. Every morning he drove out in a rickety old Ford.

**Articles with geographic names**

**The following geographic names are used without any article**:

– *names of continents*: Africa, Antarctica, America, Asia, Australia;

Note. **The Arctic** and **the Antarctic** are used with the definite article as they denote the regions (the land and the sea) round the north and south poles.

– *names of countries, counties, provinces, states*: France, Italy, Texas, Wisconsin, Devonshire, Scotland;

Note 1. Some names of countries, counties, etc. require the definite article; some other names can be used with or without the definite article: **the Argentine (but: Argentina), (the) Congo, (the) Lebanon, (the) Senegal, the Ruhr, the Saar, the Ukraine, the Crimea.**

Note 2. Names of states consisting of word groups are used with the definite article: the United States of America (the USA), the Russian Federation.

– *names of cities, towns or villages*: London, New York, Stockport;

Note. The only exception if **the Hague**.

– *names of mountains and islands* (but not names of mountain chains and groups of islands: Elbrus, Mount Everest, Etna, Cyprus, Man, Jersey, Java;

– *names of lakes*: Lake Michigan, Lake Baikal, Silver Lake;

– *names of waterfalls*: Niagara Falls, Victoria Falls;

– *names of bays*: Hudson Bay;

– *names of peninsulas and capes*: Hindustan, Labrador, Cape Horn;

Note. If the noun ‘peninsula’ is added, the definite article is used: the Hindustan peninsula, the Balkan peninsula.

Other geographic names take the definite article. These are:

– *names of seas, oceans, rivers, straits, canals*: the Atlantic (ocean), the Mediterranean (Sea), the North Sea, the Thames, the Mississippi, the Dardanelles, the Bering Strait, the Suez Canal, the English Channel;

– *names of mountain chains and groups of islands*: the Pennine Range (the Pennines), the Alps, the Rocky Mountains, the Canary Islands (the Canaries), the Hawaii, the Bermudas;

– *names of deserts*: the Sahara, the Gobi;

– *names of mountain passes*: the Saint Gotthard Pass;

– *geographic names having the plural form*: the Midlands, the Netherlands, the Yorkshire Forests.

Geographic names that are used with the zero article may take the definite or the indefinite article under the following conditions:

– *if a limiting article is used a geographic name takes the definite article*: It was not the France of his youth.

– *if a descriptive article is used a geographic name has the indefinite article*: It was a different Paris, unknown to him.

– *the definite article is used in the following patterns containing the preposition of*: the Bay of Biskay, the City of New York, the Mount of Olives, the Isle of Man, the Gulf of Mexico, the Strait of Dover.

**Articles with other semantic groups of proper names**

Proper names of the following semantic groups take no article:

– *names of streets, squares, parks*: Broadway, Fleet Street, Wall Street, Piccadilly, Trafalgar Square, Central Park, Hyde Park;

Note. The exceptions are **the Strand** (in London), **the High Street**, **the Main Stree**t (in the USA).

– *names of airports and railway stations*: London Airport, Kennedy Airport, Waterloo Station, Victoria Station;

– *names of universities and colleges*: Oxford University, Harvard University, Brasenose College, Hertford College;

– *names of magazines and journals*: National Geographic, Punch, Language;

– *names of days of the week and names of months*: Monday, Tuesday, April, July;

– names of buildings, bridges: Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Colosseum, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Bridge, Tower Bridge.

Note. Same names of buildings, however, are used with the definite article: **the White House, the Tower, the Old Bailey**

Nouns of some semantic groups require the definite article. They are:

– *names of hotels, clubs, museums, picture galleries, concert halls, theatres, cinemas, monuments*: the Hilton, the National Tennis Club, the National Gallery, the British Museum, the Louvre, the Carnegie Hall, the Albert Hall, the Old Vic, the Odeon, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial;

– *names of ships and boats*: the Titanic, the Queen Mary;

– *names of parties and institutions*: the Conservative Party, the Democratic Party, the London City Council, the House of Commons;

Note. **Parliament** (in Britain) is used without any article (but: **the British Parliament**). The definite article before **congress** (in the USA) may be dropped, but it is equally correct to use it.

– *names of newspapers*: the Morning Star, the Daily World, the Economist, the Times.