

Table Of Contents:

- [General rules](#)
- [Known or mentioned person or thing](#)
- [Clear from the context](#)
- [Unique things](#)
- [Defined person or thing](#)
- [Whole group of people](#)
- [Noun referring to all](#)
- [Superlative forms](#)
- [Ordinal numbers](#)
- [Common expressions](#)
- [Names](#)

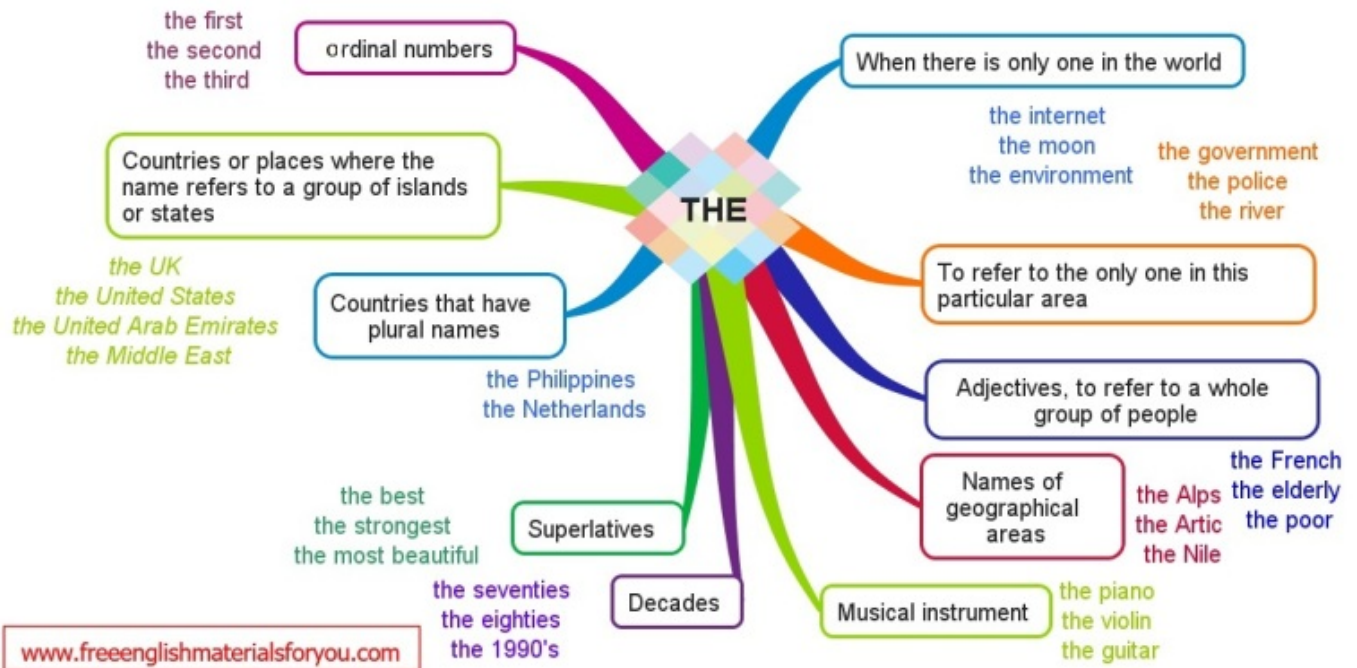
We use the **definite article 'the'** in front of [countable and uncountable](#) nouns to talk about **specific** things, the only one of its kind, things everyone knows about, or, to refer back to something that's already been mentioned.

- **The** window in my room is open. (specific window "in my room")
- Did you buy your notebook in **the** shop near our college?
- I love this cafe; **the** croissants here are delicious. (refers to specific croissants of this cafe)

General rules

We can use **'the'** in the following ways:

We use "the" with:



via <https://freeenglishmaterialsforyou.com/tag/definite-article/>

Known or mentioned person or thing

We use 'the' to refer back to a person or thing that has already been mentioned earlier or that is known from the context:

- *There is an early train to London, so I suggest that we take **the** train. (refers back to 'an early train')*
- *This is a cat. **The** cat is grey, and its paws are white. (refers back to 'a cat')*
- *There are an apple and a pear on a plate. I will take **the** apple.*

Clear from the context

We use 'the' when you assume there is just one of something in that place, even if it has not been mentioned before:

- *We went on a walk in **the** forest yesterday.*
- *Where is **the** bathroom?*

Unique things

We use 'the' before one of a kind or unique things (names of places, planets, unique titles, etc.):

- Look at **the moon**; it's so beautiful tonight.
- Tim is traveling across **the Atlantic Ocean**.
- **The Pope** is visiting Brazil next month.

Defined person or thing

We use 'the' to refer to specific things that are defined by a phrase, (often a relative clause), immediately following the noun:

- **The** novel I read yesterday was pretty interesting. (not any novel, but the one I read yesterday)
- **The** movie that I saw earlier will be on TV next week.
- **The** muffins that they sell here are absolutely delicious.

Whole group of people

We use 'the' with adjectives that act as nouns to describe a whole class or group of people or things:

- These luxurious estates are owned by **the rich**.
- People in our town always help **the poor**.
- The elderly always try to teach **the young**.

Noun referring to all

We use 'the' to say something about all the things referred to by a noun:

- **The kangaroo** is found only in Australia (= Kangaroos are found only in Australia)
- **The heart pumps** blood around the body. (= Hearts pump blood around bodies)

Superlative forms

We use 'the' with the superlative forms of [adjectives](#) and [adverbs](#):

- This is **the best** restaurant in the city.
- Michael prefers only **the oldest** artifacts for his collection.
- What is **the biggest** lake in the world?

Ordinal numbers

We use 'the' before ordinal numbers and the words 'first', 'last', 'right', 'wrong', 'only':

- This is **the first** time I've been here.
- We've taken **the wrong** way!
- She is **the only** woman I love.

Common expressions

We use 'the' with common expressions such as *in the morning; in the evening; in the afternoon; to/at the cinema/theater/movies; to/at the shop/market/store*:

- Let's go **to the theater** tonight.
- They came **in the evening** and stayed for half an hour.
- I'm running **to the store**. Do you need anything?

More common expressions that use 'the':

- *all the same*
- *by the way*
- *in the afternoon/night*
- *on the one hand/on the other hand*
- *on the right/on the left*
- *on the whole*
- *the day after tomorrow*
- *the day before yesterday*
- *(one or) the other*
- *play the (piano/violin)*
- *to tell the truth*

Names

Although we do not normally use the definite article with names, there are some exceptions.

They are covered in more detail in '[Article with Proper Nouns](#)'. Here's a short summary:

1. some countries - *the United Kingdom; the United States; the Netherlands*;
2. geographical features such as mountain ranges, groups of islands, rivers, seas, oceans and canals - *the Himalayas; the Canaries; the Atlantic*;
3. newspapers: *The Times; The Washington Post*;
4. well known buildings or works of art: *the Taj Mahal; the Mona Lisa*;
5. organisations: *the United Nations*;
6. hotels, pubs and restaurants (except for ending in '-s'): *the Ritz, but: Morel's Restaurant*;
7. families: *the Browns*.

Note: We use the [indefinite](#) articles 'a' and 'an' when the noun is not specific, known, or in any other case not mentioned above. But, sometimes we do not use an article at all. For certain uncountable nouns or when a noun is used to refer to a whole group or category, we do not use an article. We call this the [zero article](#).

Here's a good video from EmgVid explaining how to use definite article:

See also:

[Articles with Proper Nouns](#)

[The Indefinite Article](#)

[The Zero Article](#)