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How to use the definite article “the” appropriately?

Created: Monday, 20 July 2015 09:57 | Published: Friday, 14 August 2015 03:22 | Written by Shailja Varma | Print

English is a language which creates magic with words. What matters is how effectively and purely we use it. When it comes to communication, English has a got supreme status as theglobal language of communication . On an average, we speak about 500-700 words per day. Out of these 700 odd words, there are some words that we use repetitively in a day. One such word is an article called “the”.



Learn The Appropriate Usage Of ‘The’

The definite article “the” is the most frequently used word in English. Let’s learn how to use this definite article.

1. Singular and Plural nouns

We use the definite article “the” before singular and plural nouns, when the noun is specific or when referring to a particular thing.

Examples:

The dog, that my neighbor’s had, died away.
The baby in pink dress, is my friend’s baby.

In the first example, you can see that we are referring to a particular dog and same way in the second example we are referring to a specific baby who is dressed in pink. Hence, we use “the” when referring to something specific.



2. Countable and Uncountable nouns

entirely.

Examples:

I like to go by the roadways.
Neha spilled the water all over the floor.

3. Geographical use

When it comes to geographical use of the definite article, we do have some rules. However, we don't use the article before:

a. Names of most countries/territories: Russia, Japan, New Zealand;
b. Names of cities, towns, or states: Tamil Nadu, New Delhi, Mumbai
c. Names of streets: Mahatma Gandhi Road, Sector 19.
d. Names of lakes and bays: Sukhana Lake, except when we refer a group of lakes like the Great Lakes
e. Names of mountains: Mount Everest, Mount Fuji except with ranges of mountains like the Himalayas
f. Names of continents (Asia, Europe)
g. Names of islands (Madh Island) exception lies when there is group of island chains like the Hebrides, or the Canary Islands.

However we use 'the' before:

a. Deserts: The Sahara desert
b. Countries (Plural) : the Philippines, the United States
c. Oceans, seas, rivers: The Pacific Ocean, The Arabian Sea, The Ganges
d. The large areas: The Middle East

4. Omission of articles

There are some common nouns before which we do not use 'the':

· Names of languages and nationalities: Japanese, Russian, German
· Names of sports: Kabaddi, Hockey, Cricket
· Names of academic subjects: Mathematics, Science

Hope the above examples will help you to use the article 'the' appropriately. However, it is hard to remember all the rules whilespeaking in English. Hence, practice is the only thing that can take you forward. You can join an online spoken English class and ensure you keep on improving your communication skills.

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-By Chander Madan

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