

## A Study this example:

I had **a sandwich** and **an apple** for lunch.

**The sandwich** wasn't very good, but **the apple** was nice.



JOE

Joe says '**a** sandwich', '**an** apple' because this is the first time he talks about them.

Joe now says '**the** sandwich', '**the** apple' because we know which sandwich and which apple he means – **the** sandwich and **the** apple he had for lunch.

Compare **a** and **the** in these examples:

- ☐ **A man** and **a woman** were sitting opposite me. **The man** was American, but I think **the woman** was British.
- ☐ When we were on holiday, we stayed at **a hotel**. Sometimes we ate at **the hotel** and sometimes we went to **a restaurant**.

B We use **the** when we are thinking of a specific thing. Compare **a/an** and **the**:

- ☐ Tim sat down on **a chair**. (maybe one of many chairs in the room)  
Tim sat down on **the chair nearest the door**. (a specific chair)
- ☐ Do you have **a car**? (not a specific car)  
I cleaned **the car** yesterday. (= my car)

We use **a/an** when we say what kind of thing or person we mean. Compare:

- ☐ We stayed at **a very cheap hotel**. (a type of hotel)  
**The hotel where we stayed** was very cheap. (a specific hotel)

C We use **the** when it is clear which thing or person we mean. For example, in a room we talk about **the light / the floor / the ceiling / the door / the carpet** etc. :

- ☐ Can you turn off **the light**, please? (= the light in this room)
- ☐ I took a taxi to **the station**. (= the station in that town)
- ☐ (*in a shop*) I'd like to speak to **the manager**, please. (= the manager of this shop)

We also say '(go to) **the bank / the post office**':

- ☐ I have to go to **the bank** and then I'm going to **the post office**.  
(The speaker is usually thinking of a specific bank or post office.)

and '(go to) **the doctor / the dentist**':

- ☐ Clare isn't well. She's gone to **the doctor**.
- ☐ I don't like going to **the dentist**.

Compare **the** and **a**:

- ☐ I have to go to **the bank** today.  
Is there **a bank** near here?
- ☐ I don't like going to **the dentist**.  
My sister is **a dentist**.

D We say 'once **a week** / three times **a day** / £1.50 **a kilo**' etc. :

- ☐ I go to the cinema about once **a month**.
- ☐ 'How much are those potatoes?' '£1.50 **a kilo**.'
- ☐ Helen works eight hours **a day**, six days **a week**.

## Exercises

## 72.1 Put in a/an or the.

- 1 This morning I bought a book and ..... magazine. .... book is in my bag, but I can't remember where I put ..... magazine.
- 2 I saw ..... accident this morning. .... car crashed into ..... tree. .... driver of ..... car wasn't hurt, but ..... car was badly damaged.
- 3 There are two cars parked outside: ..... blue one and ..... grey one. .... blue one belongs to my neighbours. I don't know who ..... owner of ..... grey one is.
- 4 My friends live in ..... old house in ..... small village. There is ..... beautiful garden behind ..... house. I would like to have ..... garden like that.

## 72.2 Put in a/an or the.

- 1 a This house is very nice. Does it have ..... garden?  
b It's a beautiful day. Let's sit in ..... garden.  
c I like living in this house, but it's a shame that ..... garden is so small.
- 2 a Can you recommend ..... good restaurant?  
b We had dinner in ..... very nice restaurant.  
c We had dinner in ..... best restaurant in town.
- 3 a What's ..... name of that man we met yesterday?  
b We stayed at a very nice hotel – I can't remember ..... name now.  
c My neighbour has ..... French name, but in fact she's English, not French.
- 4 a Did Paula get ..... job she applied for?  
b It's not easy to get ..... job at the moment.  
c Do you enjoy your work? Is it ..... interesting job?
- 5 a 'Are you going away next week?' 'No, ..... week after next.'  
b I'm going away for ..... week in September.  
c Gary has a part-time job. He works three mornings ..... week.

## 72.3 Put in a/an or the where necessary.

- 1 Would you like an apple?
- 2 How often do you go to dentist?
- 3 Can you close door, please?
- 4 I have problem. I need your help.
- 5 How far is it from here to station?
- 6 I'm going to post office. I won't be long.
- 7 Paul plays tennis. He's very good player.
- 8 There isn't airport near where I live.
- 9 Nearest airport is 70 miles away.
- 10 There were no chairs, so we sat on floor.
- 11 Have you finished with book I lent you?
- 12 Chris has just got job in bank in Zurich.
- 13 We live in small apartment in city centre.
- 14 There's shop at end of street I live in.

Would you like an apple?

## 72.4 Answer these questions. Where possible, use once a week / three times a day etc.

- 1 How often do you go to the cinema? Three or four times a year.
- 2 How often do you go to the dentist?
- 3 How often do you go away on holiday?
- 4 How long do you usually sleep?
- 5 How often do you go out in the evening?
- 6 How many hours of TV do you watch (on average)?
- 7 What's the usual speed limit in towns in your country?