

# Determiners and articles

A **determiner** goes before a noun or noun phrase. The most common determiners are **the**, **a** and **an**. They are also known as **articles**.

The **definite article** is **the**. It is normally used when we are talking about a particular thing.

## Examples:

**the** piano

**the** egg

**the** new school

The **indefinite article** is **a** or **an**. These are normally used when we are talking about a thing in general.

## Examples:

**a** piano

**an** egg

**a** new school

We use **a** before a word beginning with a consonant and **an** before a word beginning with a vowel. Words beginning with a silent **h** are exceptions. We use **an** before them because they have a vowel sound.

## Examples:

**a** hospital (*h is not silent*)

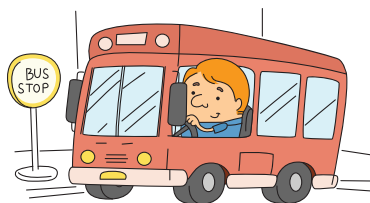
**an** hour (*h is silent*)

## Warm up



1 Identify the **determiners** in each sentence below.

- The people, who were waiting at the bus stop, wanted the next bus to be red.
- An artist, who painted in the style of Van Gogh, once entered his work in an exhibition.
- A local choir beat a flautist, a clarinettist and a pianist to win first prize at the National Music Festival.

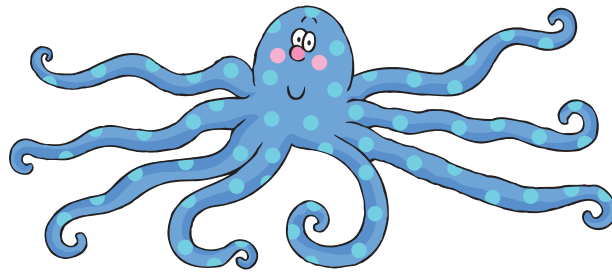


## Test yourself



2 Which sentence uses the correct **determiner**?

- a) We eat the cake every day.
- b) A octopus has eight legs.
- c) She travels into the London every day for work.
- d) He wanted to buy a new car.



## Challenge yourself



3 Choose **a**, **an** or **the** to fill in the gaps in the sentences below.

- a) Although \_\_\_\_\_ tide was coming in, we still managed to have some time playing on \_\_\_\_\_ beach.
- b) On Saturday \_\_\_\_\_ weather will be humid with \_\_\_\_\_ thunderstorm likely.
- c) Mum asked us to shut \_\_\_\_\_ windows because \_\_\_\_\_ rain was coming in.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ African elephant has larger ears than \_\_\_\_\_ Asian elephant.
- e) Our class went on \_\_\_\_\_ visit to \_\_\_\_\_ science museum in London.
- f) My sister screamed when she saw \_\_\_\_\_ large, hairy spider crawl across her bedroom.



How did you do?



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1.
  - a) The people, who were waiting at the bus stop, wanted the next bus to be red.
  - b) An artist, who painted in the style of Van Gogh, once entered his work in an exhibition.
  - c) A local choir beat a flautist, a clarinettist and a pianist to win first prize at the National Music Festival.
2. He wanted to buy a new car.
3.
  - a) Although **the** tide was coming in, we still managed to have some time playing on **the / a** beach.
  - b) On Saturday **the** weather will be humid with **a** thunderstorm likely.
  - c) Mum asked us to shut **the** windows because **the** rain was coming in.
  - d) **An / The** African elephant has larger ears than **an / the** Asian elephant.
  - e) Our class went on **a / the** visit to **a / the** science museum in London.
  - f) My sister screamed when she saw **a / the** large, hairy spider crawl across her bedroom.

# Determiners and articles

## Learning objective

We are learning how to use determiners (**the, a, an**) correctly in our writing.

## What pupils already know

- Pupils should already be using *the, a* and *an* in their writing.
- They should also be able to recognise vowel letters, consonant letters and to hear the difference between words that start with a silent *h* and words where the beginning *h* is sounded.

## Key vocabulary

determiner, article, definite article, indefinite article, consonant, vowel, silent *h*

## Teaching notes

- Explain to pupils that we put short words called **determiners** before nouns or adjectives. The short words *a, an* and *the* are the most common ones we use. These are also called **articles**.

### Example 1: Which word is the determiner in each of these?

a boy    the boy    an owl    the owl

Elicit from the examples that:

- We usually use *the* when we are talking about a particular thing. *The* is called the **definite article**.
  - We usually use *a* or *an* when we are talking about a thing in general. *A* or *an* is called the **indefinite article**.
- Remind pupils that we use *a* before a word that starts with a **consonant** sound. We use *an* before a word that starts with a **vowel** sound.

### Example 2: Would you use *a* or *an* before these words?

*heart*    *horse*    *hour*    *honest*    *hair*

Remind pupils that if the *h* at the start of a word is silent, we use *an*.

Make sure pupils can hear the difference between *heart, horse* and *hair* where the *h* is sounded, and *hour* and *honest* where it is silent.

## Independent activity

Refer pupils to the *Year 4 Grammar and Punctuation Pupil Book*, pages 28–29.

# Determiners and articles

## Use and apply

### Task A: Which article?

- Look at the sentences below.

the      a      an      no article

- Decide which of the articles in the box belongs in each sentence.

- a) \_\_\_ Internet
- b) Mind \_\_\_ gap!
- c) You need to wear \_\_\_ sun hat.
- d) Never disturb \_\_\_ hornets' nest.
- e) Wear \_\_\_ sunscreen if it's hot.
- f) Christmas
- g) At \_\_\_ zoo we saw zebras.
- h) We also saw \_\_\_ baby elephant.
- i) Close \_\_\_ door, please!
- j) It made \_\_\_ hairs of my head stand on end.
- k) Jupiter is \_\_\_ biggest planet in our solar system.
- l) He's \_\_\_ honest young man.

### Task B: Code breaker

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence. Write down the letters of the correct answers. Rearrange the letters to find the hidden word.

- a) Holly is \_\_\_\_\_ smartest dog in training class.  
C a                      A the                      B an
- b) I have \_\_\_\_\_ idea! Let's go swimming.  
A a                      B the                      C an
- c) I would like to learn how to play \_\_\_\_\_ flute.  
H a                      I the                      J an
- d) Tony loves eating \_\_\_\_\_ pizza.  
L no article              M a                      N the
- e) Next week we are going to \_\_\_\_\_ theme park.  
R the                      S an                      T no article
- f) Edinburgh is \_\_\_\_\_ capital city of Scotland.  
R an                      S a                      T the
- g) I'll take \_\_\_\_\_ blue top.  
D no article              E the                      F an

### Task C: Idiom central

- Complete these well-known idioms using the correct articles.
  - When you have finished, discuss with your partner what you think the idioms mean. Think of a situation when you might use one.
- a) To talk \_\_\_\_\_ hind legs off \_\_\_\_\_ donkey.
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_ ball's in your court.
  - c) You are barking up \_\_\_\_\_ wrong tree.
  - d) \_\_\_\_\_ bird in \_\_\_\_\_ hand is worth two in \_\_\_\_\_ bush.
  - e) She likes to call \_\_\_\_\_ spade \_\_\_\_\_ spade.
  - f) It's not over until \_\_\_\_\_ fat lady sings.

# Answers

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### Task A

a) The Internet b) Mind the gap! c) You need to wear a sun hat. d) Never disturb a hornets' nest. e) Wear (no article) sunscreen if it's hot. f) (no article) Christmas g) At the zoo we saw zebras. h) We also saw a baby elephant. i) Close the door, please! j) It made the hairs on my head stand on end. k) Jupiter is the biggest planet in our solar system. l) He's an honest young man.

### Task B

The hidden word is ARTICLE

### Task C

- a) To talk the hind legs off a donkey.
- b) The ball's in your court.
- c) You are barking up the wrong tree.
- d) A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- e) She likes to call a spade a spade.
- f) It's not over until the fat lady sings.

Meanings:

- a) To talk a lot.
- b) You must make the next decision.
- c) To misunderstand or be wrong about something.
- d) If you start something early you are more likely to succeed.
- e) To tell the truth about something.
- f) The result isn't certain until the very end.