

*With Sincere Sympathy*  
FROM THE TWO OF US



OUR FIRST STEP: Two studies on article errors made by Russian speakers. Differences in two studies: Lydia, 84 self-generated sentences or translations: Number of subjects (ca. 25) Russian native speaker translators, interpreters, wannabees, and guides. Volodia’s study, sentences pre-selected for difficulty, ca. 20 Russian native speakers long-time residents of U.S.

Study	Correct is 0		Correct is the		Correct is a	
	Used the 0>the	Used a 0>a	Used a the>a	Used 0 the>0	Used the a>the	Used 0 a>0
LRS study (84 errors)	34	5	10	20	7	8
VK Study (21 subjects, 18 sentences, 108 errors)	25 (4*)	0	14(2)	39 (6)	20 (6)	10 (2)

\*number of different sentences in which errors occurred

Set of Errors (no. of errors)	Over use of articles	Under use of articles	the<->0 errors	a<->0 errors	a<->the errors
Lydia (84)	39	28	54	13	17
Vladimir (83)	25	49	64	10	51
Total (167)	64	76	118	23	68

Two interesting differences between results of studies: 1) greater tendency to underuse articles in speech and overuse in a written test situation with unlimited time; 2) “a-the” errors are much more common in the written test situation (possibly because very difficult choices do not occur frequently under natural conditions) There is some hint that different individuals tend preferentially to make different types of errors.

Conclusions of the two studies: Errors in article use by Russian speakers are not random. Errors made on a given sentence or type of sentence tend to be the same. The number of confusions among two of the possible three (a/an, the, 0) article choices depends significantly on pairs. In general a-0 choices cause the fewest problems, the-0 the most. Since errors made are not based on incorrectly applying rules in the speakers’ native language (since Russian and other Slavic languages have no articles) there is something in the rules themselves or their applications that is causing problems. It makes sense to concentrate on the most frequent types of problem when trying to help people.

Slight differences in results for two studies may be attributable to populations (translators vs. Volodia’s correspondents) and conditions, i.e., self generated sentence vs. test sentences, and spoken vs. written conditions. It looks tentatively as if some individuals have a tendency to over- or underuse articles (particularly “the”) relative to 0-article. Completely apart from better understanding of the rules, if such individuals are aware of their natural tendency it may be helpful for them to do the reverse in cases of doubt.

The sources of many errors may be 1) particular and not involve misunderstanding of rules (indeed some errors may result from over-consistent application of rules) and 2) applying rules in the case of abstract nouns. We will try to address these two problems, in the talk or at least the handout material., but first let us take a look at some of Volodia’s sentences.

**Sentences in Vladimir 's set causing 7 or more errors**

Sentence	Correct	Error (n/20)	Hypothesized error source	Explanation
1. Why are you saying that? Is it because you think that __most of the people think the same way?	0	the (7)	People have learned that “most” to indicate the superlative degree of an adj. requires “the” and perhaps have generalized to this case. Rules for phrases indicating quantity (usually without an adjective) are different. See tip 8 through 11.	We say either most people or most of the people in this phrase when we are referring to a general population. {The most people is also barely possible to refer to a majority of a particular subset, We took a poll of the students in my class. The most people preferred essay tests.) Многие делают ошибку, считая, что most всегда определяет превосходную степень и поэтому перед ним всегда надо ставить определённый артикль the. Действительно, когда мы переводим most как "самый" – эти превосходная степень, и надо ставить the. He is the most experienced doctor in this hospital. Но, с другой стороны, предложение: "Он - крайне /чрезвычайно опытный доктор"- переведётся на английский как He is a most experienced doctor. ( в смысле - один из многих очень опытных докторов). В нашем случае most people or most of the people переводится как "большинство населения" и артикля не требует вообще.
2. To find the proper answer you have to search _ Internet?	the	0 (9)	“Internet” may be seen as a name, which does not require an article. “Internet” differs from Google (which does not require an article) in two ways, first it consists of meaningful morphemes providing an intelligible description of the system. Second, it is not a proprietary name.	When names consist of a common noun or a common noun with a modifier they take the article “the.” “Internet” is either perceived in the language as a neologism or as the word, “net,” modified by a prefix. Another way to look at this is the Internet a specific product is so popular and important that it has become a concept, with a single member. The model to be followed here is “the world” or “the Earth.” Интернет – это слово (словообразование, которое грубо можно объяснить как "группа связанных между собой компьютерных сетей, которая может функционировать как одна сеть), единственное в своём роде и потому требующее определённого артикля. С другой стороны, Google or Yahoo – это имена, и артикля не требуют.
3. I am not _ _hundred percent sure that he is right.	a	0(9)	This is a rule that only applies to a few words, hundred, thousand, million, etc. Also it is possible that non-native speakers do not hear the “a” pronounced before hundred to mean 100. See tip 12.	Words such as hundred, thousand, etc. have to be preceded by a number, but in the case of 100, 1,000, one may optionally be (and frequently is) replaced by “a.” Всегда надо помнить A hundred, a thousand, a mile, a minute в значении "одна сотня", "одна тысяча" и т.д. в отличие от такого случая, как, например, I am ninety percent sure that..., где артикль перед числительным не требуется.
4. It was welcomed by __ Russian reading public.	the	0(11)	Confusion between “Russian” a noun meaning the language and “Russian” as an adjective to modify a specific or nonspecific noun. Secondly, public may be seen as a mass noun, which does not require an article. However, it is treated in English as a reference to an organized group of people and	The exact set of people being referred to is specified. Здесь точно определена группа людей.

			requires “the” when used as a noun even if not further specified. A similar treatment is required for “population,” and “community.”	
5. Her letter was written in ___ illiterate Russian	0	the (12)	Again there seems to be the mistaken idea that describing some-thing with an adjective is equivalent to specifying it.	Illiterate here is a descriptive adjective that does not precisely define a specific set of Russian. Except when such a set is specified or when the word language follows the language name, a language name is not preceded by the. Перед названиями языков артикль не требуется, если речь не идёт специфически о какой-то части языка. Но если само слово «язык» следует за названием языка, тогда надо использовать артикль the, напр., the Russian language.
6. ___ sound of my regular phone is much better.	the	a (1)		Here sound refers to the particular sound quality of this phone—a specified concept. Здесь sound имеет значение "качества звука моего обычного (т.е. определённого) телефона". Артикль “the” – здесь очевиден.
7. ___ sound is much better when I speak on my regular phone	the	a (13)	Unclear why this is so much more difficult than the above, it is the same sound.	A specified sound, that heard on a particular telephone—requires the definite article.  Тот же вариант, как и в предыдущем случае.
8. You can find the same idea in all_ _following examples.	the	0 (7)	All can frequently be used with no article, calling all cars, all men are mortal, perhaps this is an over-generalization from such cases.	Reference is to a specific well delineated set of examples. Здесь речь идёт обо всём наборе специфических примеров. Отсюда –определённый артикль "the "перед "following examples." Вообще говоря, неплохо запомнить некоторые слова, перед которыми всегда ставят определённый артикль , такие как : right and wrong, only, main, principal, central, left and right, same, following, present, former and latter (последний) и некоторые другие.

**Clarifying examples with Abstract Nouns:**

0	the	a	Plural
Life is hard.	The life of a sailor is dangerous.	He lived a life of service. Could also be “the” with a slightly different nuance.	I am interested in the lives of great artists. Could also be “0” with a slightly different nuance.
Grief is a productive emotion.	The grief (that) I feel cannot be hidden.	But then a grief came into their lives. Could also be “0” with a slightly different nuance.	One joy shatters a thousand griefs. Chinese proverb
Freedom is not free.	One of the freedoms (that were) mentioned by Churchill is the freedom from fear.	He felt a freedom such as he had never felt before. Could also be “0” with a slightly different nuance.	Churchill spoke of four freedoms, but there are many more. Compare with, “Churchill spoke of the four freedoms, which were.....”
Reform is never easy.	The reform of the tax system introduced by Sen. Blue is...	A reform that I would like to see instituted is....	There must be reforms of the court system.
Inspiration simply would not come to me.	The inspiration for the novel was an incident in his youth.	His life serves as an inspiration to all of us.	Abstract artists cite various inspirations, including nature.
Opinion always influences so-called logical thinking.	What is the opinion of the majority of the people on this?	What I said was only an opinion not a judgement.	Opinions vary on that issue. Also, “Opinion varies..”
Literature is my passion.	The literature of indigenous	He wanted to create a	He wanted to study the

	peoples has been rediscovered.	literature based on logic. He wanted to create literature based on logic.” In this case “literature” would mean “works of literature,” while with “a” it would mean a system of literature.	national literatures of Africa.
This author’s plots are always marked by complexity.	The complexity of his explanation is misleading.	Her works are marked by a complexity of feeling. Could also be “0” with a slightly different nuance.	They were too young to understand all the complexities of morality.
Do not confuse appearance with reality	The reality is that she cannot perform her job.	Soon what had seemed to be a dream became a reality. Could also be “the” with a slightly different nuance.	The realities of our situation are as follows... followed by a list. “The reality of our situation” would be followed by a description.
Ability counts but is not the only factor.	She lacks the ability to concentrate.	Sympathy is an ability that can be trained like other abilities.	Even the so-called disabled may show remarkable abilities
Sound seemed to come from everywhere in the concert hall.	I cannot bear the sound of cardboard rubbing together.	Then they heard a sound.	We keep hearing sounds in the night.
Russian is a difficult language to learn. He spoke good Russian. (Description, not specification.)	The Russian spoken in the Ukraine shows the influence of Polish. A completely specified subset of Russian.	He spoke a fluent but heavily accented Russian. Describing a particular speaker’s Russian. Could also be “0” with a slightly different nuance.	Ethnic Russians are the majority in the RF.
Shape is an important factor in classifying sea shells.	What was the shape of the seashell you found?	I did not recognize the chair, it was just a shape in the dark.	The first grade lesson involved cutting out shapes.
Time is a river.	Do you know the time?	It was a time of great turmoil.	Times have changed.

\* the use of a with a true abstract noun is less common and, in many instances, in sentences where “a” might be used, “the or 0 is not incorrect and conveys an only slightly different nuance.

Note: any abstract noun may become part of a descriptive phrase modifying a concrete (or other) noun and then the rules for the head noun apply. A life-altering event, The sound-deadening insulation, The Russian speakers among us, Reform minded politicians.

### ARTICLES SOME GENERAL RULES

1. Do not believe everything in grammar books, we have found many of their general statements to be out-dated or only true with many exceptions. Do not trust any general statement using words like “abstract,” “specific,” etc. to be true without exception. Some are of course, but they seem to be in the minority.
2. Concentrate on when to use the and when no (0) article, and on article use with abstract nouns. This is where most of the errors are made. Remember that no (0) article is used in both the most specific cases (names) and the most general (abstract concepts).
3. When a noun is used as an adjective or as part of a descriptive phrase modifying another noun, it is always the head (second) noun that determines article use. When an adjective (especially a quantifier) is used as a noun, article usage may differ from normal.
4. The rules on article use in geographical and institutional names are the most complex of all, and are covered in a separate chart in your materials, which we probably will not have time to discuss.
5. Beware of words that can function as more than one part of speech. The rules concerning articles used with them may differ in their different functions. It frequently seems that differential use of articles is used to signal which of the parts of speech is being used in a given context.

## PARTICULAR TIPS

1. The following words are never preceded by “a” or “the,” my, your, her, his, its, our, their, this, that, these, those, whose, what, which, every, some, any, enough, either, neither, all. Possessive pronouns, like the possessive forms of nouns are also never followed by articles. Nor are the words this, these, or those.
2. When “that,” “what,” “who(m)” or “which” function as relative pronouns to introduce clauses or phrases they may be followed by either article. For example, *Did you know that an elephant has escaped from the zoo? Do what the teacher tells you. Does she know who the father is? I never liked chess, which my father taught me to play.* But this following occurs across phrase boundaries and does not really count.
3. Interrogatives (question markers) [“what, who, which, when, where, how, why, whose”] are never preceded by articles
4. “What,” “who,” “which,” “when,” “where,” “how,” “why,” “whose” are never followed by articles when they introduce questions. *What time is it? (Compare: what is the time?) Whose turn is it? Which train are you taking?*
5. “What” is sometimes used to introduce an exclamation followed by a noun, and in that case the article “a” is always used. *What an idea! What a mess! etc.*
6. “What” and other question words can also be followed by “the” + expletive to add vehemence to a question or indicate dismayed amazement. *What the Hell are you doing?! Who the heck are you? How the dickens should I know? Where the devil are my keys?* This pattern holds for unprintable expletives and is best thought of as representing the phrase “the+expletive” being embedded in an ordinary question.
7. “When, where, how and why” may be used as relative adverbs (equivalent to the phrases “at what time, at what place, in what manner, and for what purpose) to introduce clauses and in this case may be followed by either article. *I was sleeping when the police returned. I don’t know how he got in without my seeing him.* Again this does not really count.
8. The adjectives of quantity: some, any, each, enough, all, much, many, few, several, either, and neither” can come directly before a noun (serving as a determiner adjective) and in this case no article is used. *Some people are approaching., Take any chair. I told each student individually. Did you have enough warm clothes? I chose neither option. All men are created equal.* However, these words can be used as nouns and then are followed directly by “of: in which case, an article –“the,” or much less frequently “a,”--must be used. *Several of the students came to see him. It was too much of a good thing. Many of the animals were frightened. Each of the women chose a partner. You can fool all of the people some of the time. Either of the alternatives is fine with me.* However, the exceptional form “all +the+ plural noun” (e.g. all the people in my class”) is frequently used. Note “all” is the only adjective of quantity that may be followed by “the” in this way.
9. Do not use an article with few or little when the meaning is to emphasize how small the number is. - *I have few friends willing to lend me that kind of money.* (У меня мало друзей, готовых...). There is little to be said in his favor. (Немного/ мало можно сказать...).
10. BUT Use “a” before few and little when the intent is to emphasize more than nothing (несколько/ немного- в значении "какое-то количество"). -*I have a few friends still willing to lend me money.* (У меня есть несколько друзей, готовых...). *We still have a few eggs left; would you like one for breakfast. I had a little time before I had to leave so I went for a walk.* {Exception: after “only” and “just” use “a” even though the meaning is мало/ немного/ несколько в значении "мало". *I have only a few minutes left.* (У меня осталось всего несколько минут = У меня осталось мало времени). *There is just a little jam in the jar.* (Осталось совсем мало джема в банке).
11. There are a number of particular usages relating to articles used with words of quantity. Some of them are used only in exceptional cases or have little bearing on meaning but we will detail them all here for the sake of completeness. Reader: proceed at your own risk.

- a) “The many” and “the few” can be used as nouns to mean a large or small number of people. *Many are called but few are chosen.* The phrase “a select few” refers to an elite minority and phrases of the type “a lucky few” are also used. (Such phrases are not possible with any other quantifiers.) “Many” may be preceded by “a” if it is followed by a past participle. *Love is a many splendored thing. A many-headed monster....*
- b) “Least,” “most,” and “fewest” as superlative markers are used with the article “the” when followed by an adjective. *The director picked the least (most) talented singer in the chorus to be his assistant.* When “least” and “most” are used with verbs to mean “least frequently”, use of “the” before them is optional. Of all my children, she eats (the) most and weighs (the) least. When “most” or “fewest” are followed by a noun the use of no article or “the” is either optional or carries only a subtle difference in meaning. “Most” with no article means preponderance while “the most” means more than anyone or anything else. *Most houses on the street were dark. She sold the most cookies.* Most preceded by the article “a” and followed by an adjective and a noun is adverbial and means extremely. *He was a most unpleasant man.*
- c) When comparatives “more,” “less(er)” and “fewer” refer implicitly or explicitly to a group of two, they are preceded by “the.” *He was the more annoying of my daughter’s two boyfriends. I chose the lesser of two evils.* When more, less, or fewer are used in double comparisons with or without explicit nouns they are preceded by “the.” *The more the merrier. The less I see him the more I like him. The fewer hours I spend away from my computer, the more weight I gain.*
- d) “More” and “less” can be used as adverbs modifying adjectives followed by nouns and in this case are preceded by “a.” We want a more reliable car. *We are looking for a less expensive option.* In this case, no group of two is postulated but an implicit comparison is drawn with something already mentioned. When a noun does not follow the adjective, more and less are used without an article. *She gets more beautiful every day. He seems less annoying than he did before.*
- e) “More,” “less,” “much” and “little” can be used as adverbs modifying past or present participles, in which case they are preceded by whatever article is appropriate as above *He was the much loved son of older parents. That car is even more dilapidated than ours. I am reading a little known author. I chose the less travelled road.*
- f) “Much”, in the adverbial meaning of “a great deal”, of course, can precede the words more, less, or fewer and comparative degrees of adjectives, e.g., higher and in this case “much” is preceded by whatever article would have preceded more, less, fewer, or the comparative adjective. *He is much taller than his brother. He is a much better reader than his brother. He is much more studious than his brother. He is the much better reader of the two boys.*
- g) In what appears to be a vestige of an archaic usage, “many” may be followed by “a”+ singular noun. *I have known many a maid. We have traveled many a mile together.* In all cases this usage has an archaic, ironic, or jocular tone.
- h) Few, many and several, which are typically used as determiners to replace an article can also be used as adjectives preceded by “the” or a possessive *The few friends he had were angry at him. She was one of the several students selected. He is mourned by his many family members.* For the use of few with a see tip 9.
- i) The phrase “a little” means either “a small amount,” or, as an adverb, “not much, not frequently.” *Would you like a little lunch? I am a little tired.*
- j) When “either” and “neither” are followed by a singular noun that covers both alternatives in a choice, no article is used. *I can take either child to school. Coffee or tea? Neither one, thank you.* Alternatively, “either” and “neither” are followed by of+the+plural noun. *I can take either of the children to school. I want neither of those drinks.* If both alternatives are specified in a sentence with “or,” “a” or “the” is used as appropriate. *I am going to wear either the red skirt or the blue dress. I ended up buying neither a Camry nor a Corolla.*
- k) When both is followed by a plural noun referring to both alternatives, either no article or “the” may be used with little difference in meaning. *Both men came. Both the men came. Both of the men* is also correct. In a sentence with each alternative provided and connected with the word “or,” “the” or “a” or one of each may be used as appropriate. *Both the school principal and a friend came.*
12. Cardinal numbers, which ordinarily are not preceded by articles, can be preceded by “the” to indicate that a specified group of e.g., 7, is being referred to. *We saw the seven dwarves, but Snow White was taking a cigarette break.* Since all numbers

but one refer to plurals, “a” is not generally used before them. The exception is when “one” is dropped. *I want one pencil, or I want a pencil.* (the latter is more common unless in answer to a question concerning “how many”). This is true for numbers such as “one” hundred, “one” thousand, etc., if “one” is not explicitly used “a” must be. *It cost a hundred dollars.* “A” may also be used before a cardinal number phrase if that phrase modifies a singular noun. *The rescue was performed by a 10-man team.* “The” can also be used in this context.

13. Use “the” before ordinal numbers and words such as next, last, following, subsequent, previous, preceding, etc. when referring to concrete objects or people.
14. BUT 1) Do not use “the” before ordinal numbers, last, and next when listing actions or abstractions (e.g. arguments, reasons, etc. *First, find the right answer, Second, circle it, Third, put its number on the answer sheet. I ate the cake for three reasons. First, I was hungry, Second, you never told me the cake was for the neighbors. Third, you always leave my snack on that table.* 2) Do not use “the” before first, second...etc. prize. *I won second prize in the essay contest.* 3) Do not use “the” with next or last, when referring directly to a specific time. *We will remodel the house next year.* 4). When ordinal numbers are not used to indicate order but have the meaning of *one more/ another*, use “a” and not “the”- *They must have a third race to decide who is the winner.*
15. . Do not use an article when an identifying number follows a noun: *Motel 6, Bus number 1.* Otherwise “the” or “a/an” are used as appropriate. *Put the announcement on the third page of the issue. I am afraid we will need a fifth page if we are to fit everything in. BUT- Put the announcement on page 3.*
16. Use “a/an” to refer to a single letter or numeral. - *That letter is an A. I cannot tell if this number is a 1 or is a 7.*
17. “A/an” may be used as a substitute for “for each” or “per”. *The cost is 20 cents a pencil.*
18. Measurements. We say “the” temperature is 78 degrees today. However, “a” must be used in sentences of the type Today we have “a” temperature of 78 degrees. This same pattern holds for all measurements, e.g., *I need a board with a length of 6 feet. He lived at a distance of 4 miles from town.*
19. Use “in the morning,” “in the afternoon,” “in the evening,” but “at night.”
20. Use “the” before most or an adjective ending in –est for the superlative degree but “a” can be used with “most” to mean extremely (He is a most unpleasant person). Most to mean majority of when used as an adjective (determiner) is not preceded or followed by an article. Most people need at least 7 hours of sleep. (However, “most of the people” is also correct.)
21. Do not use “the” with the comparative degree of an adjective followed by “than.”. *She is a better student than her brother* Use, “the” for the comparative when you are talking about a group of two things (such that the comparative is also the superlative in that group.) *She is the smarter of their two children. I saw a car with two women inside. The younger woman was astonishingly beautiful. Of the two, I prefer the latter.* “The” is also used with double comparative phrases such as *the sooner, the better.*
22. Use “the” to refer to something that is for practical purposes unique or the only one that exists, or extremely likely to be the one a particular person thinks about, or the normal or regular thing for the person speaking or addressed. - *Look at the sky. (the sky overhead now) The air feels so good.(the air we are breathing now) What do you think of the president? The president of the U.S. Shut the door (The door to the room or house we are in.). Let’s go sit out in the garden.(The garden associated with the place where we are.). She took the cat to the vet. (Her only cat, her regular vet.)*
23. When adjectives are used as nouns to refer to general groups of people who can be described by that adjective, they always require the article “the.”. *The poor are always with us. She wanted to minister to the sick and needy.*
24. The names of family relationships –aunt, uncle, sister, cousin, etc. are never used with articles in direct address even when used informally to address a stranger (*Brother, can you spare a dime.*) When followed by a name, e.g. *Aunt Mary*, they never require articles (unless used metaphorically, *He was accused of being an Uncle Tom.*) Within a family terms, like *Aunt Mary, Cousin Ed* are generally used without possessives. When referring to a particular relative in conversation with

someone outside a family, a phrase like *Aunt Mary* usually is preceded by the possessive “my” (for one’s own Aunt Mary) and always by “your,” “his” or “her,” when referring to someone else’s *Aunt Mary* or *Cousin Ed*. Unique relatives such as mothers and fathers and possibly grandparents are generally referred to within a family by whatever name is used to address those relatives (*Mom says we have to wait till after dinner*), especially by and to children. - *Tell Daddy I called*. In adult conversation one certainly refers to “your mother” and usually “my mother,” though in some cases one may refer to “Mother” for one’s own female parent to convey intimacy. - *Mother always came to kiss us goodnight*. One’s own or someone else’s wife or husband is referred to using the possessive whether or not the name is used. - *I am waiting for my husband*. *Have you met my wife Ellen?* In some circles men find it mildly amusing to refer to their spouses as “the wife.” When referring to families of strangers in which family relationships can be inferred, one uses terms such as “the wife” and “the husband.” - *There was a family sitting next to us. The wife was reading, while the husband was attempting to deal with three screaming children*. Note: Vladimir, has noticed that in conversations many Russians omit “the” before husband or wife in the situations described above.

25. If using the name of a language alone (without the word “language”) to refer to that language in general never use an article. - *Do you speak Spanish?* “The” is only used when referring to a completely defined subset of the language. - *The Russian of the eighteenth century*; or *the Russian spoken by immigrants to New York*. Describing the language that a person or group speaks, with an adjective does not require the use of “the”. - *They speak good Russian*. Infrequently, “a” may also be used to imply one type of a particular language among others. He speaks a Russian that is fluent but accented. (this sentence is also correct with no article.)
26. HOWEVER: If the name of the language is used as an adjective modifying the word language then “the,” or rarely “a” is required. - *The Russian language has 33 letters in its alphabet*.
27. NOTE: An analogous rule applies to religions. Buddhism is increasingly practiced in the U.S. Attitudes toward the Christian faith may be changing.
28. When the name of a nationality (or ethnic group) can be pluralized (generally, in the case of adjectival forms ending in –an, –er, and some others Slovaks, Serbs. etc..), the plural form is used alone without an article to refer to members of that nationality in general. *Americans tend to be more cheerful than Russians*. Where the nationality adjective ends in a sibilant and/or does not have a special plural form (Dutch, British, French, Japanese, etc.) use “the” to signal that the reference to the nationality as a whole. *The Japanese tend to be shorter and darker than the Danish*.
29. Words referring to a theory, or school or system of thought ending in –ism and words referring to academic disciplines (usually ending in -ology) do not require articles unless a subset is being delineated (i.e., unless followed by a restrictive clause).- *Darwinism replaced religion for some people. Anthropology is a social science. BUT The anthropology of the Aleutian islands; the Darwinism espoused by Professor Black; the economics of opening your own business; the psychology of women..*
30. Use “the” for compass directions if they follow prepositions such as to, in, on, at, or from, but not if they immediately follow an action verb, e.g., walk, go, look, turn, etc. – *To the west but Go west*.
31. Use “the” with long named periods of time, *The Renaissance, the Stone Age, the 1960’s*, since these are names of unique entities.
32. Do not use an article with the names of diseases or health conditions. *She has cancer. He suffers from heart disease*. Exceptions: *the flu, the measles, the mumps, a cold, a fever, a broken leg, an allergy, a tumor, the chickenpox, a heart attack, a stroke*. There is a set of very colloquial terms, always plural preceded by “the” that purport to describe quasi medical conditions on the basis of a symptom. *She had (a case of) the sweats, the runs, the shakes, the blues, the blahs. He give me the creeps*. This usage is also extended to jocular made up terms: *Air travel gives me the heebie-jeebies. She had the screaming-meemies*.
33. Use “the” to refer to military institutions (the Army, the Navy) the police, the fire department etc. - *The party was so loud the neighbors called the police*.

34. Putatively organized groups of people are generally preceded with “the,” even if the name is given without a unique identifier one is supposed to disambiguate from context. *The Senate (of the U.S.), The GOP, The PTA (of the local school), The School Board, The Arlington County Garden Club, etc.* This usage also covers “the public,” “the population” and “the community.”
35. Always use “the” before “same.” *We drive the same kind of car. I go to bed at the same time every night.* (However, note informal conversational idioms, *Same here; same difference; and same old.*)
36. The old rule, still on the books is: do not normally use an article after expressions such as type of, kind of, sort of. However, more and more people are using “a.” *What sort of a day did you have?* (Previously, only, *What sort of day did you have?* would have been considered correct.)
37. In general, use a possessive pronoun to refer to parts of the body. *My feet are too big. His nose itches.* Exceptions 1) *I have a headache, a toothache, a stomachache, a backache, a broken leg.* 2) Any time a sentence contains myself, yourself etc. use “the” for parts of the body. *He cut himself on the leg.* 3) “The” may be used for body parts touched by an external object. - *She pulled him by the arm. He was hit in the stomach.* Note: You can also say, “by his arm.”
38. Do not use articles before the names of sports or games. - *His sport is figure skating. Let’s play baseball. No, I want to play chess.* Use “the” for the names of sports teams. *The New York Mets. The Mets*
39. Use “the” after “play” and “practice” for musical instruments. - *She plays the piano.* “A” piano refers to a specific physical object. *Men were carrying a piano into the house.* One can say either study “the piano” or study “piano.”
40. Some words can refer to either an object (building, facility) or the activity that occurs there. Use “the” to talk about going to or being at the building etc., but do not use “the” for the reference to the normal activity performed there. Some examples: *Go to bed immediately.* BUT - *She went over to the bed and straightened the covers. What does your son do all day? He goes to school.* BUT - *All the parents went to the school to help clean up after the flood.* (Other examples: court, prison, class, school, town, church) Also *Go to the office, BUT go to work.*
41. Emotions and abstract nouns in general are not preceded by an article unless they are attributed to a particular person or specified instance (in other words if you can mentally insert A/The particular kind of...). See chart of abstract nouns.
42. *The happiness that John felt..=John’s happiness.. The grief of losing one’s spouse =This grief*
43. BUT:*He was overcome with happiness, Grief can sometimes have positive results. See abstract noun chart for extensive examples.*
44. When an adjective (including a noun used as an adjective) or adjectival phrase follows the noun (i.e., the reverse of normal English order) no article is used. Cape Cod, Lake Charles, Mount Everest, Café Boeuf, Code Red). However, when the whole phrase modifies another noun, “a” or “the” must be used, *the Cape Cod real estate market, a Code Red warning.*
45. Gerunds (--ing forms of verbs used as nouns) when they refer to the action described by the verb in general are treated as abstract nouns. They not preceded by articles (*Running is good for your heart.*) except when followed by a restrictive clause or “of” phrase to refer to an instance of a particular subset of the activity (*The running of the bulls....The making of the president....*). Nouns formally identical to gerunds that refer to the results of an activity or some other concrete thing associated with the activity are treated as ordinary nouns, that are preceded by articles and can be pluralized. *Make a living.. Enter a building...In the running... Meetings...Makings (ingredients)...Writings*
46. Noun phrases of the type *Noun used as an adjective + noun derived from a verb*, when the first noun is the object of the verb referred to in the second noun, never require an article. *Project implementation (=the implementation of the project), wife beating (=the beating of one’s wife), client education (=the education of one’s clients).* a) Exceptions: In phrases of this type, if the noun derived from the verb (second noun) refers to the agent of the verb, ordinary article rules apply: *a beer chaser, the dog catcher* etc. b) if the whole phrase modifies another noun then “a” or “the” must be used as appropriate. *The project implementation stage, A wife beating accusation*

47. “A” or “the” can be used with any proper name if the name is being used to exemplify a class of entities sharing the most salient characteristic of the specific person, place or institution named. *-Perhaps, Duluth is not a New York City but it has a few cultural attractions. Copper Canyon is the Grand Canyon of Mexico. We do not want Lake Michigan to become a Lake Baikal.*
48. If a descriptor is used, followed by a name in apposition, either “a” or “the” may be used. *I think I will bring a friend, Vladimir Putin. I think I will bring the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin.* The difference in article use is based on whether I have more than one friend, and similarly whether the President of Russia is a unique descriptor.
49. When abstract nouns are used after another noun of any type plus “of” they are virtually never preceded by an article, *a man of integrity, a thing of beauty, a sense of wonder, a feeling of sadness, etc.*, (compare with concrete nouns in similar phrases: *the lady of the house, a man of the people.*)
50. Phrases of the type “a/the container of something” rarely use an article before the second noun, even if the first noun is specific. *Put the box of eggs in the refrigerator.*

#### **When do we use no (0) article?**

No article is used both in the most general cases (general reference to abstractions) and the most specific ones (names). Freedom is not free. Father is calling you.

Before indefinite plural nouns. - A man was standing in the doorway. Men were standing around outside.

Before non-count nouns. - Rice is good for you. Would you like rice or potatoes for dinner?

When generalizing about abstract nouns. - War is hell.

When generalizing about anything in the plural. - Dogs are smarter than cats.

Before the comparative of an adjective, normally. Before the names of continents, countries, states, provinces etc. unless they contain “of” – The United States of America or are of the form: Proper Name+Common Noun E.g., The Ghanaian Republic or The Soviet Union or when names are in the plural form. The Philippines. However, there are a few exceptions to this. Before name the for section or section of a country if the head noun is the country name, Central Asia, Tropical Peru.

Before the names of single lakes, mountains, islands, capes, or canyons, streets, avenues, roads, lanes or boulevards.

Before the names of universities and colleges unless they contain the word of. Before the names of languages or religions unless followed by the word language or religion or a synonym e.g., tongue, faith. – e.g., English but the English language.

Before names of buildings ending in “hospital” or “hall”.

Before an academic discipline, science, etc. if not limited.

Before most diseases.

When a noun can refer either to an object, building or place and the typical activity performed in that place, no article is used before the noun when the activity is being referred to. - I’m going to bed. But The bed in my room is broken. I was at school today. but The political meeting was held at the school.

Before determiners of quantity such as some, any, each, enough, all, much, many, few, several, either, when these are directly followed by a noun or another adjective.

Before a possessive pronoun or interrogative pronoun.

Before cardinal numbers if a specific group is not being referred to.

When an identifying number directly follows a noun.

Before terms of family relationships in address, or when used within a family, to denote a unique individual or followed by a name. Mother, Aunt Mary.

Generally before the name of a language, when the adjective is used nominally. I speak Russian. Similarly before the name of a religion or academic discipline.

To refer to a national group, when the adjective for that group has a distinct plural form. Americans.

Before few or little to indicate the negative meaning of almost none.

Before the names of sports and games.

Before phrases where the adjective follows the noun. Cape Cod.

Before gerunds when they are used generally to name an action.

Before noun phrases of the type *Noun used as an adjective + noun derived from a verb*, when the first noun is the object of the verb referred to in the second noun

**When is “the” used:** whenever something is specified (this is not the same as either named or described)

Something is specified:

a) if unique or understood uniquely. - The President of the United States. The President ..The big car (if only one is around)

- b) if it has just been mentioned to show it is the same one. - There was a man following me. I was frightened because the man seemed very strange.
- c) when referring to the regular or normal one associated with the context I am going to the store (my regular or normal store). He took the cat to the vet. (His cat, his regular vet.).
- d) when followed by a preposition (usually, of or in) or a restrictive clause (frequently beginning with that or who) that defines a subset of a more general concept which would ordinarily not be preceded by an article: The Russian of Brighton Beach. The happiness that the couple felt.
- e) To answer questions using which, which one, or an equivalent. Which one do you want? I want the blue one.
- f) In most proper names containing the word “of”
- g) With some adjectives used as nouns, The East ... The poor....
- h) with the superlative case
- i) Before the name of cities, counties unless in a phrase of the form The City of New York. Few exceptions.
- j...z+) in many specific cases as detailed above

## Article Rules for Names

	Singular	Plural	Name adj + common noun	Of in the name
Personal Names				
First names	0 Bob	The The Bobs (possible reference to a group of multiple people with first name Bob or to multiple examples of a stereotype associated with a name: All the Joe Sixpacks were out in force).	NA	NA
Last names	0 – Smith or Mr. Smith or Bob Smith	The The Smiths (alternative)	The The Smith Family	
Place Names for Geographical Features				
Rivers, oceans, seas, deserts, bays	The The Po The Gobi The Pacific Not used without noun for features with very common descriptors e.g., we do not say The Red to mean the Red Sea	Not used	The The Po River The Gobi Desert The Pacific Ocean The Red Sea	The The Sea of Tranquility The Bay of Biscay
Lakes, mountains, islands, capes canyons, small streams or ponds	0 Most often used with the descriptor except in cases of very well known examples such as Everest	The The Great Lakes The Rockies The Antilles The Hawaiian Islands	0 Lake Erie Grand Lake Mount Mckinley Long’s Peak Brice Canyon Bear Creek Ellis Island	Rarely used
	Singular	Plural	Name adj + common noun	Of in the name

Continents	0/the Asia, Europe Antarctica but The Arctic	Not used	The The Asian Continent	The The Continent of Antarctica
Geographical regions where all parts of the name are common nouns	The The Tundra The Piedmont The Pantanal (confusing if nouns are in other languages or rare in English)	The The Grasslands The Great Plains The Midlands	The The Eastern Shore The Far East The Dust Bowl The Bible Belt	????
Others			The The Bering Strait The Iberian Peninsula The Bermuda Triangle	The Bay of Biscay
Place names of politically defined entities				
Countries	0 (whether or not names contain a modifying adjective) Great Britain France New Zealand Belarus and now Ukraine	The. The Philipines The Maldives The United States The United Arab Emirates	The The Dominican Republic, The Soviet Union, The United Kingdom	The The Republic of the Congo The Commonwealth of Independent States The United States of America
States, Provinces. Regions (that are administratively rather than geographically defined)	0 Kansas Kentucky Province York Catalonia	Not used	0 Seems to be used only to distin- guish names when a single name is used for two adminis- trative divisions Washington State Moscow Oblast	The The State of Kentucky The Commonwealth of Virginia The District of Columbia
County in U.S.	Not used alone	Not used	0 Fairfax County Dade County	The/0 (often used officially) ((The) County of Fairfax
Cities, towns, boroughs, etc. .	0 Baltimore, New Brunswick, Paris, St. Petersburg some few cities have The incorporated in their names The Hague The Plains (Virginia)	The Not used generally but occasionally clusters of East, West, North Cityname are referred to as, e.g. The Hamptons	0 1) If offical name has word “City, 2) to disambiguate when another division has same name: Carson City Oklahoma City New York City	The The City of New York The City of Cleveland
Names of manmade entities and institutions				
	Singular	Plural	Name adj + common noun	Of in the name
Colleges, schools, universities	0 Harvard Columbia George Mason (These are abbreviations usable	Not used	0 Washington State University Fordham Law School, Mills	The The University of Washington The State University of New York

	only when unambiguous)		College Milton Academy	The School of Higher Education
Streets, avenues, lanes, boulevards etc.	0 Broadway (never used with a word like street) Main (short form of Main Street)	Not used	0 Washington St. Westmoreland Road	Rare 0/the (The) Avenue of the Americas
Parkways, expressways, turnpikes, highway, bridge	The The G.W. (short for George Washington Parkway) The Wilson (a bridge)	Not used	The The Merritt Parkway, The Jefferson Davis Memorial High- way, The New Jersey Turnpike The Brooklyn Bridge	Not used