

Common mistakes in the use of articles

The correct use of the articles is one of the most difficult points in English grammar. Here are some rules regarding the correct usage of the definite and indefinite articles.

When you talk about a person or thing for the first time, use the indefinite articles (a and an) with them.

I saw a girl. (NOT I saw the girl.)

Use the in subsequent references to that person or thing.

The girl was very beautiful. (NOT A girl was very beautiful.)

Use the indefinite article to talk about a person or thing not known to the speaker or the listener.

She is going out with a French guy. (NOT She is going out with the French guy.)

We can use the in subsequent references to that person or thing.

The French guy she is going out with is an architect. (NOT A French guy she is going out with is an architect.)

Plural countable nouns can be used without articles, especially when we are talking about things in general.

Spiders have eight legs.

Computers are useful machines.

Apples are red.

A singular uncountable noun is used without an article.

Milk is nutritious. (NOT The milk is nutritious.)

Gold is precious. (NOT The gold is precious.)