EFL Tutoring

English as a Foreign Language



English Grammar

A Student's Guide to Using 'The' in Academic Writing

General Rule



General Rule: 'the' suggests that your listener or reader knows what you are talking about

- Both of you can see the thing you are talking about
- There is only one of something
- You have mentioned something before
- You are talking about a specific known group

Figures & Tables



Use 'the' when describing figures (e.g. charts, graphs, diagrams) and tables

Examples

- The table shows...
- As can be seen from the figure, ..
- This can be seen in the diagram below;

Note: The table, figure, or diagram is 'known' because the listener or reader can probably see it in your written report or presentation



Figures & Tables



Do not use with the names of figures and tables

Examples

- The table 1 shows... > Table 1 shows...
- As can be seen from the figure 1, .. > As can be seen from Figure 1, ...

Note the use of capital 'T' in 'Table 1' and capital 'F' in 'Figure 1'



General Statements

Use 'the' with singular countable nouns in general statement about a class of things

Example:

The mobile phone has been replaced by the i-phone

Note: 'mobile phone'; 'i-phone' = singular, countable



General Statements

In general statements, do not use 'the' with plural countable nouns or uncountable nouns

Examples

The Mobile phones are commonplace in today's society

Note: 'mobile phones' = plural, countable

The Texting is a cheap means of sending messages

Note: 'texting' = uncountable

General Statements

Use 'the' with an example of a class to make a general statement

Example

The computer has changed our lives.

One of Something



Use 'the' when there is only one of something

Examples

- The Government has introduced a new policy on renewable energy.
- The Internet has changed the way people communicate with each other.

Note: Capital 'I' is usually used in the word 'Internet'



Countries



Use 'the' before the names of certain countries

- The United Kingdom
- The People's Republic of China
- The United States
- The United Arab Emirates
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Countries



Do not use 'the' if the name of the country is used attributively (i.e. as an adjective)

Example

The UK sales rose sharply between 2000 and 2010.

Numbers



Use 'the' with certain numerical expressions

- the number of...
- the percentage of....
- the proportion of....
- the ratio of......

Numbers



Use 'the' before ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd)

Examples

- In the first stage,
- The second stage involves....
- The third stage begins with....

2010

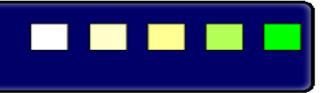
Numbers



Do not use 'the' with the names of stages

- In the Stage 1,
- The Stage 2 involves....

Adjectives



Use 'the' with adjectives for a whole class

Example

The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer.

Note: 'the' functions (is used) as an adverb

References



The Oxford Guide to English Usage, 2nd Edition (1994). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Thank you for watching!



Dr Barbara Howarth