



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

Examples

- 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- The mobile phone has been replaced by the i-phone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

Examples

- 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

Examples

- 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....



Numbers



Do not use 'the' with the names of stages

Examples

- 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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Thornbury, S. (2004). **Natural Grammar**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Thank you for watching!



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