

Adapted from: Elementary Language Practice by Michael Vince

Explanations

- We do not always use *a/an* or *the* in front of nouns. We call this 'zero article'.

General statements

Cars are not allowed to park here. Teachers work very hard.

Uncountables

Sugar is bad for you.

Abstract ideas

Love makes the world go round. War is a terrible thing.

Note that abstract words can be used in a definite way.

The war ended two years later.

Food and drink

I usually drink milk. I love eating chocolate.

languages

Do you speak Turkish? I'm learning Spanish.

Materials

This coat is made of plastic and leather.

I'm going to put some wood on the fire.

Buildings

Sue is in prison. (She committed a crime.)

Richard is in hospital. (He's ill.)

Also: *bed, class, school, college, university*

When we talk about the building only, we use an article.

Paul works at the prison. (He's not a prisoner.)

Note that we also think of work as a place.

Sam is at work.

We also use the zero article with:

Countries, states
and cities

Paolo comes from Italy.

My favourite European city is Tarragona.

Countries which are plural or a group use the definite article *the*.

the Netherlands the United States

Streets

I bought these trousers from a shop in Green Street.

Which street do you live in?

Geographical
features

We use the zero article with regions, lakes, mountains and islands.

We visited Lake Como. It's in Northern Italy.

Diana climbed Mont Blanc in record time.

Transport

We use the zero article with *by* for general forms of transport.

We went there by train. I love travelling by boat.

But: *on* foot

It was quicker to go on foot.