

5 the, a/an



1 Pronunciation of *the*

We pronounce *the* with /ə/ before consonant sounds (*b, d, k, t, s*, etc.):
the book, the sports teacher

We pronounce *the* with /i:/ before vowel sounds (*a, e, i, o, u*):
the apple, the English teacher



Pronunciation > 1.04

2 Use of *the*

We use *the* when there is only one of something:

The sun is very hot today. (There's only one sun.)

Jamie's in the garden. (We only have one garden.)

Don't forget to lock the front door. (There's only one front door on our house.)

Can I see the manager? (There's only one manager.)

We DON'T use *the* before plural or uncountable nouns when we talk about things or people in general:

I like children. (children in general)

Milk is good for you. (milk in general)

Compare:

I like the children. (the children in that family)

The milk tastes horrible. (the milk in that bottle)

3 *the* or *a/an*?

We use *the*, not *a* or *an*, when it is clear which person or thing we are talking about.

Compare:

I need to get a bus to the station.
(I don't know which bus.)

The number 2 bus goes to the station.
(We know which bus.)

Let's go to a restaurant this evening.
(There is more than one restaurant.)

Let's go to the restaurant in Dean Street.
(We know which restaurant.)

Would you like a biscuit?
(There is more than one biscuit.)

Jason had the last biscuit!
(We know which biscuit.)

We use *a* or *an* when we use a noun for the first time, and *the* when we use it again:

I bought a new coat and a dress yesterday. The coat is really warm.

'There's a really nice new café in the village.'

'Oh, do you mean the café with tables outside? Yes, it's great.'