

## 2 Articles *a/an, the*, no article

Excuse me. Is there **a café** here?

Yes, **the café's** on the ground floor.

### 1 *a* or *an*? *the* /ə/ or *the* /i:/?

*A, an* and *the* are **articles**. We use *a* before consonant sounds (*b, d, k, t, s*, etc.):

**a café, a tourist, a museum**

- AND before *u* or *eu* when they sound like /j/ (as in *you*): **a uniform, a European city**

We use *an* before vowel sounds (*a, e, i, o, u*): **an interesting book, an unusual job**

- AND before words that begin with a silent *h*: **an hour** /ən aʊə/

We pronounce *the* with /ə/ before consonant sounds: **the book, the tourist**

Before vowel sounds we pronounce *the* with /i:/: **the art gallery, the English teacher**



**Pronunciation ▶ 1.03**

### 2 General or particular meaning?

We use *a/an* or no article when we are talking about things in general:

<i>a/an</i> + SINGULAR NOUN	no article + PLURAL NOUN	no article + UNCOUNTABLE NOUN
Is there <b>a café</b> here? (any kind of café)	<b>Sandwiches</b> aren't expensive. (sandwiches in general, all sandwiches)	I don't like <b>music</b> . (music in general, all music)

We use *the* to talk about something particular:

<i>the</i> + SINGULAR NOUN	<i>the</i> + PLURAL NOUN	<i>the</i> + UNCOUNTABLE NOUN
Yes, <b>the café's</b> on the ground floor. (there is only one café here)	Did you get <b>the sandwiches</b> ? (we know which sandwiches)	I don't like <b>the music</b> on that CD. (only the music on the CD, not music in general)



We don't use *the* when we are talking about things in general:

~~X Is there the cash machine near here?~~ ✓ *Is there a cash machine near here?*

~~X I prefer the films to the books.~~ ✓ *I prefer films to books.*

### 3 New information or known information?

We use *a/an* or no article when we mention something for the first time.

We use *the* when we mention it again:

*I've just bought a new suit. It's the grey suit we saw in the shop window last week.*

*'Carla asked her teacher for advice.' 'Really? Was the advice useful?'*

*'Have they filled in entry forms?' 'Yes, I've got the forms here.'*

We use *the* when the listener knows which particular person or thing the speaker is talking about:

*It was a great holiday. Have you seen the photos yet? (the photos of the holiday)*