

3 Special uses of *a/an* and *the*

Michelle's **a student** at **art school**. She's in the museum copying **a beautiful painting**.

1 Jobs and descriptions

We use *a/an* with the names of jobs:

Michelle's **a student**.

I want to be **an engineer**.

We also use *a/an* to describe a person or thing, usually with an adjective:

She's copying **a beautiful painting**.

He's **a nice person**.

That was **an interesting exhibition**.

2 Institutions: purpose or building?

institution school college university prison hospital

When we think of the purpose of these institutions we don't use *the*.

But when we think of the building, we use *the* or *a/an*.

PURPOSE	BUILDING
Michelle is a student at art school .	The art school is in North Street.
My brother's sick in hospital .	Excuse me, where's the hospital ?
The murderer was sent to prison .	The prison has stone walls.

3 The media

We use *the* with the names of most newspapers, but most magazines have no article:

newspapers the Daily News the Sun the New York Times

most magazines Vogue Newsweek Time Hello

'Did you see her photo in **Vogue**?' 'No, it was in **the Sun**.'

We say *the cinema*, *the theatre* and *the radio*. We don't normally use *the* with *television* or *TV* when we are talking about the programmes:

In the mornings I like listening to **the radio** but in the evenings I prefer watching **TV**.

But we use *a* or *the* if we are talking about the machine:

There's something wrong with **the television** in my bedroom.

4 *the* + adjective for groups and nationalities

the young the old the elderly the rich the poor the sick the homeless
the disabled the unemployed the blind the deaf the injured the dead

Some adjectives can be used as nouns if they describe a particular group, e.g. all the people who are rich = *the rich*. We use a plural verb:

The rich are getting richer and **the poor** are getting poorer.

We can use nationality adjectives that end in *-ch/-sh/-ese* in the same way, e.g. *French*, *Spanish*, *Dutch*, *Japanese* (► Unit 95.2):

The French have elected a new president. (all the French people)

The Irish are voting on the new European Union tomorrow. (all the Irish people)

! We can't use other nationality words in this way:

✗ ~~The Brazilian~~ are used to hot weather. ✓ **Brazilians** are used to hot weather.

