CHAPTER 12
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  I ate an apple.
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  research
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A1 Before You Read

Discuss these questions.
What do you do when you have a cold? Do you take medicine? vitamins? herbs?
What special treatments are used in your family? Do they work?

A2 Read

CD2 T17 Read this book excerpt to find out about the special medicinal properties of old-fashioned chicken soup.

Chicken Soup,
Always Chicken Soup

Have you ever wondered why chicken soup is such a popular remedy for the common cold? The first authority to recommend chicken soup was the distinguished twelfth-century physician Moses Maimonides. According to the story, when Sultan Saladin, a powerful Muslim military leader, begged Maimonides for a cure for his son’s asthma, Maimonides prescribed chicken soup. The prescription was probably effective because chicken soup is now known to have medicinal properties.

Scientific research has begun to explain why age-old food remedies, passed down for centuries by medical sages and grandmothers, have been effective against respiratory problems such as colds and the flu. The doctor who knows most about this is Irwin Ziment, M.D., a lung specialist at the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Ziment has concluded from a study of early medical literature that foods used to fight diseases for centuries are very similar to many of the drugs we now use. Chicken, for example, contains a certain chemical which is released when you make the soup. This substance is remarkably similar to a common drug for bronchitis and respiratory infections. In fact, the drug was originally made from chicken feathers and skin. The substance in chicken soup has been shown to help clear the lungs of
congestion in much the same way as certain drugs.

Marvin Sackner, M.D., a lung specialist at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, agrees. “There’s an aromatic substance in chicken soup… that helps clear your airways.” Dr. Sackner is the author of the famous chicken soup study, published in 1978. Dr. Sackner did not believe that chicken soup, often called “grandma’s penicillin,” fought cold symptoms any better than hot water. In his study, 15 healthy men and women sipped hot chicken soup, hot water, or cold water. Five minutes and 30 minutes later, he measured the rate at which substances passed through the subjects’ nasal passages.

To Dr. Sackner’s surprise, chicken soup was better at fighting congestion than hot or cold water. Furthermore, even the chicken soup vapors were superior to those of hot water. Dr. Sackner even thinks that cold chicken soup “will help clear the ‘cold in your nose,’ and if the chicken soup is hot and steamy, it will work even faster and more efficiently.”

And for a super-congestion-fighting dose of grandma’s penicillin, Dr. Ziment advises adding lots of garlic, onions, pepper, and hot spices like curry or hot chillies. He calls such soup “the best cold remedy there is.” To avoid or fight colds and the flu, a bowl of spicy chicken soup every day is Dr. Ziment’s prescription. One last thing: It’s better to sip chicken soup slowly rather than drink it, in order to get the maximum therapeutic effect.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy your chicken soup. Grandma was right after all!

Adapted from Food—Your Miracle Medicine

**A3 After You Read**

Write T for true or F for false for each statement. Change the false statements to true ones.

---

1. Chicken soup has been used for centuries as a cold remedy.  **T**
2. Chicken soup makes you feel better emotionally, but not physically.  
3. There is a chemical in chicken that fights colds.  
4. Dr. Sackner showed that hot water was most effective.  
5. Chicken soup is good for colds, but when ill you should avoid spices.  
6. For maximum health benefit, you shouldn’t eat chicken soup too fast.  

---

**Definitions:**

- **aromatic:** having a pleasant smell
- **congestion:** blockage
- **medicinal:** having the curing properties of medicine
- **remedy:** something that helps an illness; a cure
- **respiratory:** related to breathing
- **sage:** a very wise person, usually old and highly respected
- **therapeutic:** able to heal or cure
**Indefinite and Definite Articles; Review of Nouns**

**Think Critically About Form**

A. Look back at the book excerpt on page 256 and complete the tasks below.

1. **IDENTIFY** Look at the third, fourth, and fifth sentences in the second paragraph (lines 24–34). Then find these common nouns:
   - literature
   - drugs
   - chemical
drug
centuries
   - chicken
   - soup

2. **RECOGNIZE** Which nouns have adjectives before them? Which have articles? Which have both adjectives and articles? What are those adjectives and articles?

3. **RECOGNIZE** Which nouns do not have adjectives or articles before them?

4. **LABEL** Which nouns are singular? Which are plural?

B. Discuss your answers with the class and read the Form charts to check them.

---

### Nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNT NOUNS</th>
<th>NONCOUNT NOUNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SINGULAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>PLURAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(one) banana</td>
<td>(two) bananas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(one) physician</td>
<td>(two) physicians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Indefinite Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR COUNT NOUNS</th>
<th>PLURAL COUNT NOUNS</th>
<th>NONCOUNT NOUNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A / AN + SINGULAR COUNT NOUN</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ø + PLURAL COUNT NOUN</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ø + NONCOUNT NOUN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ate a banana.</td>
<td>I ate Ø bananas.</td>
<td>I didn’t eat Ø fruit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you eat an apple?</td>
<td>Did you eat Ø apples?</td>
<td>Did you eat Ø fruit?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SOME / ANY + PLURAL COUNT NOUN</strong></th>
<th><strong>SOME / ANY + NONCOUNT NOUN</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I ate some bananas.</td>
<td>I didn’t eat any fruit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you eat any apples?</td>
<td>Did you eat some fruit?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#### Definite Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR COUNT NOUNS</th>
<th>PLURAL COUNT NOUNS</th>
<th>NONCOUNT NOUNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE + SINGULAR COUNT NOUN</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE + PLURAL COUNT NOUN</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE + NONCOUNT NOUN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ate the banana.</td>
<td>I ate the bananas.</td>
<td>I didn’t eat the fruit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you eat the apple?</td>
<td>Did you eat the apples?</td>
<td>Did you eat the fruit?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Nouns
- Common nouns can be count or noncount.
- Count nouns can be used with numbers. They have both singular and plural forms.
- Noncount nouns cannot be used with numbers. They do not have plural forms.
- Common nouns that occur with an indefinite article or no article (Ø) are indefinite nouns.
- Common nouns that occur with a definite article are definite nouns.

#### Indefinite Articles with Singular Count Nouns
- Indefinite articles can occur before a singular count noun (an apple) or before an adjective + singular count noun (a green apple).
- Use an before words that begin with a vowel sound; use a before all others.
  - If a noun begins with the letter h, use an if the h is not pronounced. Use a if the h is pronounced.
    - an hour  an honor  a house  a human
  - If a noun begins with the letter u, use an if the u is a short vowel. Use a if the u is pronounced like the y in yellow.
    - an umbrella  an understanding  a unit  a utensil

#### Indefinite Articles with Plural Count and Noncount Nouns
- Do not use indefinite articles before plural count nouns or noncount nouns.
- Some and any often act like indefinite articles with plural count nouns or noncount nouns. We often use some in affirmative sentences and questions and any in negative sentences and questions.
- Indefinite articles, some, and any do not have to be repeated when nouns are combined with and.
  - a banana and (an) apple  some fruit and (some) cereal

#### Definite Articles with Count and Noncount Nouns
- The definite article the can be used before all common nouns—singular and plural count nouns and noncount nouns.

(Continued on page 260)
• Definite articles can occur before a noun (*the apple*) or before an adjective + noun (*the green apple*).
• Definite articles do not have to be repeated when nouns are combined with *and.*
  *the bananas and (the) apples*

**B1 Listening for Form**

Listen to these facts about the common cold. Write the articles you hear. Write Ø if there is no article. After you finish, check the capitalization.

Although __the__ common cold is generally not serious, it causes _______ people to be absent from _______ work and go to _______ doctor more often than _______ other illnesses. _______ majority of colds come from _______ contact with _______ surfaces that _______ people touch frequently. People transmit _______ cold viruses on these surfaces to their eyes, noses, and mouths. Once _______ symptoms appear, there are many treatments for relieving _______ discomfort. Whatever _______ person does, unfortunately, _______ cold will probably still last from six to ten days.

**B2 Identifying Indefinite and Definite Articles**

Read the passage and underline all the common nouns, along with their articles and adjectives. Then write *D* for definite or *I* for indefinite to indicate whether the noun is used definitely or indefinitely in its context.

Have you ever eaten **coconut**? You probably have, but you may not be very familiar with coco palms. Coconuts come from coco palms, which are trees that grow in tropical regions. Coco palms are very unusual because all of the parts of the tree have a commercial value. For example, coconuts are an important food in tropical regions, and coconut milk, which comes from inside the coconut, is a nutritious drink. Coconut oil, the most valuable product of all,
also comes from coconuts. Some of the other parts of the tree that are eaten include the buds and young stems. Besides food, the tree is also used for manufacturing commercial products. The leaves are used for making fans and baskets, and the fibers from the husks and trunks are made into mats, cord, and rope. Even the hard shells and the husks are used to make fuel, and the trunks are used for timber.

**B3 Building Sentences with Indefinite and Definite Articles**

Build as many meaningful sentences as possible. Use an item from each column. Punctuate your sentences correctly.

I ate some rice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I ate</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>pencil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>they had</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some</td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the</td>
<td>idea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B4 Transforming Sentences**

A. Change the underlined singular nouns to plural nouns, and the underlined plural nouns to singular nouns. You may also need to change pronouns and verbs.

1. I took a book and a pen with me.
   
   *I took books and pens with me.* OR
   
   *I took some books and pens with me.*

2. Take a peach.

3. Those are herbs.

4. Children get more colds than adults.

5. We need some magazines with more information.

6. I watched a movie last night.

B. Change the underlined definite articles to indefinite articles, and the indefinite articles to definite articles.

1. I went to a bank and took out some money.
   
   *I went to the bank and took out the money.*

2. Take the sheet of paper and the pen.

3. Did you eat some cookies or Ø cake?

4. I'm taking the medication and eating the yogurt twice a day.

5. Did you see a movie last week?

6. I went to a store yesterday.
The Indefinite Article

Think Critically About Meaning and Use

A. Read the sentences and answer the questions below.
   1a. My friend wants to marry a millionaire. She met him last year.
   1b. My friend wants to marry a millionaire. She hasn’t found one yet.
   2a. Bananas are tropical fruits.
   2b. Please buy some bananas on your way home.

1. **ANALYZE** Compare the meanings of 1a and 1b. In which sentence does the speaker have a specific mental picture of the underlined noun?

2. **DIFFERENTIATE** Compare the meanings of 2a and 2b. Which sentence refers to a small quantity of the underlined noun? Which sentence describes or classifies the underlined noun?

B. Discuss your answers with the class and read the Meaning and Use Notes to check them.

Meaning and Use Notes

**Introducing Nouns with Indefinite Articles**

- **1A** Use a/an or no article (Ø) to introduce a common noun when it is first mentioned.

  **First Mentioned**
  
  A: What did you do last night?
  
  B: I watched a movie. What did you do?
  
  A: I had Ø friends over and made Ø dinner.

- **1B** Usually when a common noun is introduced, it is specific for the speaker, but not specific for the listener. This means that the speaker has an idea or a mental picture of the noun, but the listener does not. Sometimes the noun is not specific for the speaker or the listener.

  **Specific for the Speaker Only**
  
  Jill: I bought a new coat yesterday.
  
  (Jill has a specific coat in mind, but the listener doesn’t.)

  **Not Specific for the Speaker or Listener**
  
  Joe: I need new shirts.
  
  (Joe doesn’t have any specific shirts in mind, and the listener doesn’t either.)
1C When introducing singular count nouns, *a* and *an* often express the quantity “one.” When introducing plural count and noncount nouns, some and any are often used to express a small quantity.

**Singular Count Nouns**  
Would you like a cookie?  
I'd like to order a steak, please.

**Plural Count and Noncount Nouns**  
Would you like some cookies?  
I'd like to order some steaks, please.  
Do you have any information about this medicine?

### Classifying and Describing Nouns

2 Common nouns with *a*, *an*, and Ø are often used in sentences with *be* to classify or describe nouns. *Some* and *any* are not used this way.

My father is a teacher.

What are those? They're vitamins.  
X They're some vitamins. (INCORRECT)

### C1 Listening for Meaning and Use

Listen to each situation. Is the noun specific or not specific for the speaker? Check (✔) the correct column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPECIFIC</th>
<th>NOT SPECIFIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>orange juice</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>apples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>a new doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>a friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>some soup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>an appointment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>a book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>cough medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes 1A–1C

CD2 T19
C2 Introducing New Information

Complete these conversations with a sentence that introduces new information with three indefinite nouns. Use a/an, some, or Ø.

1. A: What did you do last night?
   B: I read a book, watched a movie, and took a bath.

2. A: What did you buy at the supermarket?
   B: 

3. A: What do you take on a trip?
   B: 

4. A: What do you want for your birthday?
   B: 

5. A: What do you keep in your pockets?
   B: 

6. A: What can you buy at a hardware store?
   B: 

C3 Classifying Nouns

A. Make a list of all the foods you have eaten in the last two days. Do not list specific quantities. Use a/an, some, or Ø next to each noun that you list. Then sort the nouns into three categories: Healthy, Unhealthy, or Not Sure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHY</th>
<th>UNHEALTHY</th>
<th>NOT SURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>an apple</td>
<td>potato chips</td>
<td>eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milk</td>
<td>a candy bar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cereal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Share your list with a partner. Discuss whether you agree with the way your partner has classified each item. What foods are you not sure about? Why?

A: Do you think eggs are healthy or unhealthy?
B: I think they’re healthy.
MEANING AND USE 2

The Definite Article

Think Critically About Meaning and Use

A. Read the sentences and answer the questions below.
   a. Did you hear what the mayor said this morning on the news?
   b. I bought a sweater and a shirt but the sweater was too small.
   c. Please pass the salt.

1. **ANALYZE** In which sentence does the speaker mention the underlined noun more than once?
2. **ANALYZE** In which sentence are the speaker and the listener from the same geographic area?
3. **ANALYZE** In which sentence can the listener see the underlined noun?

B. Discuss your answers with the class and read the Meaning and Use Notes to check them.

Meaning and Use Notes

**Identifying Nouns with the Definite Article**

*The* is used with a common noun when it is specific for both the speaker and the listener because of information they share. Following are some different ways that speakers and listeners share information about a noun.

**1A** The listener can identify the noun if it has already been mentioned in a conversation or text. When it is mentioned again, the speaker uses *the*. Notice that the exact words do not have to be repeated.

- **First Mentioned**
  - I ordered a steak and a salad for lunch.
  - A kitten was found in a box near my house.

- **Mentioned Again**
  - The steak was great, but the salad was awful.
  - The poor creature was cold and hungry.

**1B** The listener can identify the noun if he or she can see or hear it.

**Visual Context**

Mother: Watch out! Don’t shake the table. You’ll spill the milk.
Son: OK. Could you please pass the rice?

(Continued on page 266)
- **1C** The listener can identify the noun from the situation or from general knowledge.

  **General Knowledge**

  I went to an unusual wedding. The bride and groom wore jogging clothes.
  (The listener knows that a wedding has a bride and a groom.)

- **1D** The listener can identify the noun if the listener and speaker share geographic or social information.

  **Shared Information**

  A: Do you think the secretaries make enough money?
  B: Yes. I think they do.
  (The listener assumes that this means the secretaries who work with them.)

- **1E** Certain names of places and things that are very familiar to the speaker almost always use *the*. The listener may not know the specific identity of the noun but assumes that it refers to a place that the speaker habitually goes to, an object the speaker habitually uses, and so on.

  **Familiar Nouns**

  the bank  the doctor  the library  the office  the radio
  the beach  the gym  the mall  the park  the store
  the dentist  the hospital  the movies  the post office  the TV

  When you go to the store, could you buy some milk? And turn off the TV before you go.

- **1F** The listener can identify the noun if the noun is unique (there is only one).

  **Unique Nouns**

  I took my guests to the best restaurant in town, and they chose the most expensive item on the menu.

  Earth rotates around the sun once every 365 days.

  Please look at the top of this page.

- **1G** The listener can identify the noun with the help of modifiers in the noun phrase.

  **Noun Modifiers**

  I took my guests to the best restaurant in town, and they chose the most expensive item on the menu.

  The book that's on sale is on the counter. (*that's on sale* tells which book)
  The red book is mine. (*red* tells which book)
D1 Listening for Meaning and Use

Listen to each sentence. Would the sentence that follows use a definite or indefinite article? Choose the sentence that is more likely to follow.

1. a. I bought a blue shirt.
   b. I bought the blue shirt.

2. a. The poor child lost all the money.
   b. A poor child lost all the money.

3. a. Does anyone know a writer?
   b. Does anyone know the writer?

4. a. Did the bride wear a long gown?
   b. Did a bride wear the long gown?

5. a. A steering wheel.
   b. The steering wheel.

6. a. Not anymore. I lent the CD to Joan.
   b. Not anymore. I lent a CD to Joan.

7. a. A doorbell is ringing.
   b. The doorbell is ringing.

8. a. Should I send a new one?
   b. Should I send the new one?

D2 Choosing Definite or Indefinite Articles

Work with a partner. Read each situation and decide whether to use a, an, or the. Then discuss the reasons why you chose your answers.

1. If there are no chairs left in this classroom, you’ll have to sit on ______ the ______ floor.
   Or maybe you should go next door and ask if you can borrow ______ chair from that classroom.

2. ______ apartment that I live in now is too small. I have to start looking for ______ new one. I’d really like to find ______ apartment with ______ garden.


4. Did you read ______ magazine that I sent you last week? It had ______ interesting story about ______ mayor of Philadelphia.

5. Would you answer ______ telephone, please? I’m trying to diaper ______ baby.
Vocabulary Notes

**Another vs. The Other**

*Another* is indefinite like *a/an*. It means "one more" or "a different one."

*There are several cookies on a plate. Your friend asks:*

*Do you want another cookie?*

*The other* is definite. It refers to a specific alternative when you are choosing between two things.

*There are only two cookies on a plate. Your friend takes one and asks:*

*Do you want the other cookie?*

**D3 Using Another and The Other**

Work with a partner. Make up two short conversations for each of these contexts. Use another in one conversation and the other in the second conversation.

1. at a friend's house

*Conversation 1*

*A: There are a few cookies left. Would you like another one?*

*B: No thanks. I've already had several."

2. at the supermarket

3. at school

4. at a restaurant

5. at a department store

**D4 Making Inferences Based on General Knowledge**

Read each sentence and then write a related sentence with a definite noun that you can identify based on the context. Use these nouns:

- the author
- the mechanic
- the bank teller
- the driver
- the receptionist
- the waiter

1. Last summer I took a bus ride through a terrible storm.

*The driver was excellent, and we reached our destination safely.*

2. I had lunch at the Pinewood Restaurant yesterday.
3. My car began making a strange noise, so I took it to a garage.

4. I went to deposit some money at the bank this morning.

5. I read a great book during my vacation.

6. I called my doctor’s office yesterday afternoon.

Beyond the Sentence

Connecting Information
Like pronouns, articles help make sentences clear and connect ideas in a paragraph or conversation. Indefinite nouns are used to introduce new information. Definite nouns are used to refer to old information, which is more specific.

We’ve just bought a new rabbit. We brought her home last week, and she’s doing fine. My son is so protective of the rabbit that he insisted on getting up to check on her for the first few nights. But now that he is convinced that the rabbit can stay alone, he doesn’t get up to check on her anymore. He sleeps through the night in the comfort of his own room, and the rabbit spends her nights in her little house in the backyard.

D5 Connecting Information

A. Work with a partner. Number these sentences to make a meaningful paragraph. Pay attention to the articles and pronouns to help you decide on the order.

   ___ He cut the wire and jumped from the window into a creek.
   ___ No one knows exactly where he found the ladder.
   ___ Another prisoner has escaped from the local prison.
   ___ He was able to reach a high window covered with wire.
   ___ He swam across the creek, climbed over a wall, stole a car, and drove away.
   ___ Sometime during the night, the prisoner climbed up a ladder.

B. Read the story aloud to see if it sounds right. Be ready to explain your choices.
D6 Talking About Familiar Nouns

Work with a partner. Take turns saying each of these sentences. Add a specific identity for each underlined noun. Do any of the nouns have different identities for you and your partner? Why?

1. I went to the supermarket last night.
   
   *I went to the A & P supermarket near my house last night.*

2. I went to the bank before I came to class.

3. I bought the newspaper before I came to class.

4. The mayor is going to speak on television tonight.

5. I didn't feel well yesterday, so I went to the doctor.

D7 Understanding Shared Information

A. Work in small groups. Imagine that you overhear the conversations below. Think about each situation and try to figure out what information the speaker and listener(s) share. Use your imagination.

   1. Two women are talking. One of them says, “Did you order the flowers yet?”
      
      *The women are sisters. They’re sending a gift to their mother.* OR
      *The women are friends. One of them is getting married soon and they’re discussing the wedding.*

   2. Two young men are talking. One says, “The car costs $2,500.” The other says, “I don’t know how I’ll be able to afford it.”

   3. A woman approaches a man and says, “I got the money.”

   4. Three women are talking. One asks, “Did you bring the photographs?”

   5. A woman is talking to a man. The woman says, “How could you forget to pay the bill?”

   6. Two men are talking. One says, “Oh, by the way, I got the tickets.”

B. Choose one of the situations from part A. Make a list of details about the situation. Then write a paragraph about it. Begin with a clear topic sentence.

   *Two sisters are talking about a gift that they have planned to send their mother for her birthday. The gift is a large bouquet of her favorite flowers. After the flowers arrive, they are going to take their mother to an elegant restaurant for to celebrate. She doesn’t know that all of her friends will be there.*
Article Use with Generic Nouns

Think Critically About Meaning and Use

A. Read the sentences and answer the questions below.

1a. Unfortunately, my children have **colds** at the moment.
1b. **Colds** cannot be cured by antibiotics.
2a. **Garlic** can help fight certain diseases.
2b. I put **garlic** in the soup.
3a. I have a **mango** in the refrigerator.
3b. **A mango** is a sweet-tasting fruit.
4a. The **typewriter** is not used much anymore in most offices.
4b. I put the **typewriter** away because we never use it.

1. **ANALYZE** Which underlined noun in each pair refers to a whole class or group of nouns?

2. **ANALYZE** Which underlined noun in each pair refers to a specific noun or nouns?

B. Discuss your answers with the class and read the Meaning and Use Notes to check them.

Meaning and Use Notes

Overview of Generic Nouns

1. We don't always use a noun to refer to a specific object, event, or concept. Sometimes we use the noun to refer to a whole class or group of objects, events, or concepts. This noun is called a generic noun, and statements about a generic noun are called generic statements.

   \[ \emptyset \]
   
   **Flies** are insects.
   
   I like **rice**.
   
   **A/An**
   
   A **bird** can fly, but a **reptile** can't.
   
   **The**
   
   The **laser** has become an important tool in surgery.

(Continued on page 272)
Using No Article (Ø)

2 Plural count nouns and noncount nouns are the most common type of generic nouns. No articles are used with them. They are often used in generic statements to classify nouns, express likes or dislikes, and give opinions.

Classification | Likes and Dislikes | Opinions
---|---|---
Flies are insects. | I don’t like rice. | Carrots are good for you.

Using A/An

3 Singular count nouns with a/an can also be used as generic nouns to represent all members of a class. The nouns are often used in definitions and in sentences expressing general factual information.

Definitions
A locksmith is a person who makes and repairs locks and keys.
A penguin is a black and white bird that lives in the Antarctic.

Factual Information
A bird can fly.
A child has six to ten colds per year. An adult has two colds per year.

Using The

4A The use of generic nouns with the is less common than the use of other types of generic nouns. Definite generic nouns express a more formal tone and are used more often in scientific and technical writing. They usually refer to plants, animals, mechanical objects, and other scientific phenomena.

More Formal Writing | Less Formal Writing
---|---
The mosquito can spread malaria. | Mosquitoes can spread malaria.
The computer has changed our lives. | Computers have changed our lives.

Remember that the with a plural noun is not used generically. It refers to specific plural nouns.

The computers that we bought last year have helped our business.

4B Musical instruments are often referred to generically with the definite article.

I used to play the piano and the violin.
### E1  Listening for Meaning and Use

Listen to each situation. Check (✓) **Generic** if the noun refers to a class of things or **Specific** if the noun refers to a particular thing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GENERIC</th>
<th>SPECIFIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>the carrot</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>almonds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>garlic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>the onion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>a cold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>vitamins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>a headache</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### E2  Defining Nouns with A/An

Work with a partner. Make up a simple generic statement that defines each noun below. Use singular count nouns with *a/an*. You may need a dictionary.

*A spatula is a cooking utensil.*

1. spatula
2. crib
3. iris
4. octopus
5. elm
6. calculator
7. pineapple
8. screwdriver
E3 Rephrasing Formal Generic Sentences

A. Rewrite this paragraph as a less formal version. Use plural generic nouns instead of definite generic nouns. Change pronouns and verbs when necessary. Start your paragraph with Kangaroos are...

The kangaroo is an Australian animal with very distinctive physical features. It has large back legs that are used for hopping very fast, and it has a very large tail that helps it maintain its balance. The female kangaroo carries her young around in a special pocket of skin on her stomach that is called a pouch.

B. Read these statements. Rewrite one of them as a less formal sentence and use it to introduce a short, informal explanation that you will present to the class.

The computer doesn't always make life easier. The trumpet is important in orchestras as well as jazz bands. The human heart is like a machine. The digital camera has revolutionized popular photography.

Computers don't always make life easier. Sometimes they actually make life more frustrating when they break down. For example, last week at the bank...

Beyond the Sentence

Indefinite Generic Nouns in Discourse

An indefinite generic noun (with a, an, Ø) can remain indefinite throughout a paragraph or conversation as long as it continues to refer to a whole class or group of nouns instead of a specific noun.

An onion is a small white vegetable with a strong smell and a strong taste. Researchers have found that it is actually the strong taste that makes an onion good for your blood. Unfortunately, sweet or mild onions do not have this effect on your blood. Someday, according to researchers, an onion will taste sweet and benefit your health at the same time.

E4 Choosing Between Generic and Specific Nouns

A. In these following sentences, some nouns are used generically with no article, and others are used to refer to a specific thing. Distinguish between these generic and specific uses by writing a, an, the, or Ø.

1. I don't really like Ø__1__ desserts, but my neighbor makes __2__
dessert that I’m very fond of.
2. _______ cell phone is useful in an emergency. However, in many places, it is unlawful to use _______ cell phone while driving.

3. It's hard to find _______ inexpensive clothing. _______ clothing in the stores is so expensive these days.

4. I eat _______ rice at almost every meal. _______ rice that I buy is usually on sale downtown. It's _______ very flavorful kind of rice.

5. _______ camels are animals with long necks and humps on their back. In desert areas, people ride on _______ camels and use them for transportation.

6. He's allergic to _______ cats. When he goes near _______ cat, he starts to sneeze.

B. Choose one of these sentences as the introduction to a paragraph. Write a description that continues to refer to the underlined generic noun.

I don't usually like fancy restaurants.
A vacation isn't always relaxing.
Teachers have to be patient.
A laptop computer is useful in college.

I don't usually like fancy restaurants. Sometimes they have good food, but most of the time the food is drowned in exotic sauces and the portions are very small. The worst thing about them is that the atmosphere is always very stuffy and pretentious, and I never feel at home in them. They also have outrageously expensive prices.
Think Critically About Meaning and Use

A. Read each sentence and the statements that follow. Write T if the statement is true or F if it is false.

1. I bought a tennis racket last night.
   
   T  a. The speaker has a specific tennis racket in mind.
   F  b. The listener has a specific tennis racket in mind.

2. I looked at an apartment last night, but the kitchen was too small.
   
   _  a. The listener has seen the kitchen.
   _  b. The listener has just heard about this apartment.

3. Please take the other cookie.
   
   _  a. The speaker is referring to the last cookie.
   _  b. Someone already took a cookie.

4. I'd like some cheese, please.
   
   _  a. The speaker is referring to a small quantity of cheese.
   _  b. The listener knows exactly which cheese the speaker wants.

5. Open a window, please.
   
   _  a. The speaker wants a particular window to be opened.
   _  b. There are at least two windows.

6. **Mother:** Wear the dress to school.
   **Daughter:** No, not today.
   
   _  a. The mother has a specific dress in mind.
   _  b. The daughter has a specific dress in mind.
7. I saw Maria at the post office yesterday.
    ____ a. The speaker usually goes to that post office.
    ____ b. The listener may not know that post office.

8. The snake is frightening that little girl.
    ____ a. The speaker is referring to a particular snake.
    ____ b. The sentence is about all snakes.

B. Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. **ANALYZE** Look at sentence 2. What can we assume about the listener if the speaker had said, “I looked at the apartment last night…”

2. **PREDICT** Look at sentence 8. What would the speaker have said if he or she wanted to make a statement about the effect that snakes generally have on the little girl?

**Edit**

Some of these sentences have errors. Find the errors and correct them.

1. I need a new coat. Please help me find one.

2. When you get to my house, you don’t have to ring the doorbell. Just walk in.

3. We have plenty of sandwiches. Please take the other one.

4. My grandparents were some immigrants. They came to this country in 1920.

5. She graduated with a major in the mathematics and physics.

6. The life is not always easy.

7. Calcium is mineral.

8. Please pass the rice and the salt.

9. Book I bought was on sale.

10. Let’s sit in a last row so that we can leave quickly when the play is over.
**Write**

Imagine you work as a writer for a public relations firm that does work for a family health clinic. Write the first page of a pamphlet about healthy eating. Use count, noncount, and generic nouns with definite, indefinite, and no articles, as needed.

1. **Brainstorm** Think of all the ways that food contributes to good/poor health. Make a list of healthy/unhealthy foods. Then use these categories to help you organize your ideas into paragraphs:
   - **What is the relationship between food and good health?** What lessons should parents teach their children about eating well and maintaining a healthy weight?
   - **What kinds of foods keep us healthy?** What health benefits do these foods offer? How often should we eat them?
   - **What foods should we avoid?** What are the bad effects of these foods? What advice can you give to parents and children?

2. **Write a First Draft** Before you write your first draft, read the checklist below and look at the examples of how writers discuss certain foods on pages 256–257 and 274. Write your draft using indefinite and definite articles.

3. **Edit** Read your work and check it against the checklist below. Circle grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO I ...</strong></th>
<th><strong>YES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use indefinite articles (a/an, some/any) for nonspecific nouns?</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use no article (Ø) for nonspecific plural count nouns and noncount nouns?</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use the definite article the with specific nouns?</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use plural count nouns and noncount nouns without articles to make generic statements?</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Peer Review** Work with a partner to help you decide how to fix your errors and improve the content. Use the checklist above.

5. **Rewrite Your Draft** Using the comments from your partner, write a final draft.

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**FAMILY FOOD FACTS We Are What We Eat**

Providing our children with nutritious meals is one of the greatest responsibilities of parenthood. It’s also one of the greatest gifts we can give our families...