

a Study this example:

For lunch I had **a** sandwich and **an** apple. **The** sandwich wasn't very good.

The speaker says "a sandwich / an apple" because this is the first time he talks about them.

The speaker says "the sandwich" because the listener now knows which sandwich he means – the sandwich he had for lunch.

Here are some more examples:

- There was **a** man talking to **a** woman outside my house. **The** man looked American, and I think **the** woman was Indian.
- When we were on vacation, we stayed at **a** hotel. In the evenings, sometimes we had dinner at **the** hotel and sometimes in **a** restaurant.
- I saw **a** movie last night. **The** movie was about **a** soldier and **a** beautiful woman. **The** soldier was in love with **the** woman, but **the** woman was in love with **a** teacher. So **the** soldier shot **the** teacher and married **the** woman.

b We use **a/an** when the listener doesn't know which thing we mean. We use **the** when it is clear which thing we mean:

- Tom sat down on **a** chair. (we don't know which chair)
Tom sat down on **the** chair nearest **the** door. (we know which chair)
- Ann is looking for **a** job. (not a particular job)
Did Ann get **the** job **she** applied for? (a particular job)
- Do you have **a** car? (not a particular car)
I cleaned **the** car yesterday. (a particular car, my car)

c We use **the** when it is clear in the situation which thing or person we mean. For example, in a room we talk about "**the** light / **the** floor / **the** ceiling / **the** door / **the** carpet," etc. Study these examples:

- Can you turn off **the** light, please? (= **the** light in this room)
- Where is **the** bathroom, please? (= **the** bathroom in this building/house)
- I enjoyed **the** movie. Who was **the** director? (= **the** director of the movie)
- I took a taxi to **the** station. (= **the** station of that town)
- We got to **the** airport just in time for our flight.

Also: **the** police / **the** fire department / **the** army.

We also say **the** bank, **the** post office:

- I have to go to **the** bank to change some money, and then I'm going to **the** post office to buy some stamps. (The speaker is usually thinking of a particular bank or post office.)

We also say **the** doctor, **the** dentist, **the** hospital:

- John wasn't feeling very well. He went to **the** doctor. (= **his** doctor)
- Two people were taken to **the** hospital after the accident.

For **the** see also Units 68–73.

UNIT 67 Exercises

67.1 Put in a/an or the.

Example: There was *a* man and *a* woman in the room. *The* man was American, and *the* woman looked Indian.

1. This morning I bought newspaper and magazine. newspaper is in my bag, but I don't know where magazine is.
2. My parents have cat and dog. dog never bites cat, but cat often scratches dog.
3. I saw accident this morning. car crashed into wall. driver of car was not hurt, but car was badly damaged.
4. When you turn onto Pine Tree Drive, you will see three houses: red one, blue one, and white one. I live in white one.
5. We live in old house in middle of town. There is garden behind house. roof of house is in bad condition.

67.2 Put in a/an or the.

Examples: I'm looking for *a* job. Did Ann get *the* job she applied for?

1. Would you like apple?
2. Could you close door, please?
3. We live in small apartment near center of town.
4. Have you finished with book I lent you last week?
5. We went out for meal last night. restaurant we went to was excellent.
6. Did police find person who stole your bicycle?
7. This is a nice house. Does it have garden?
8. It was warm and sunny, so we decided to sit in garden.
9. This morning I had soft-boiled egg and toast for breakfast.
10. President of the United States is elected every four years.
11. As I was walking along the street, I saw \$20 bill on sidewalk.
12. I went into the store and asked to speak to manager.
13. "Do you have car?" "No, I've never had car in my life."
14. There's no need to buy a paper. newspaper carrier brings it every morning.

67.3 Complete these sentences using the + noun.

Example: It was getting dark in the room, so I turned on *the light*.....

1. There were no chairs, so we all had to sit on
2. As soon as I saw the fire, I called
3. We didn't have any stamps, so we had to go to
4. I had a toothache, so I made an appointment with
5. Ann had to catch a train, so I took her to
6. When we found that someone had broken into our house, we called
7. Bill wasn't feeling well, so he went to
8. We didn't have any money, so we had to go to
9. The plane was delayed, so we had to wait at for three hours.
10. Jill had a car accident. She'll be in for at least two weeks.