



## Lesson 47

### When To Use The Definite Article

In English, the use of the Definite Article 'The' is sometimes a bit confusing. Here are examples of when to use the Definite Article.

All geographical names for natural waters and canals take 'the'. Only the names of lakes do not take the before them:

#### Examples:

the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the English Channel, the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Mexico, the Bay of Bengal

But we say Lake Como, Lake Superior, Lake Victoria etc.

Chains of hills and mountains take 'the' before them. Individual hills and mountains usually do not take the defining adjective:

But we say Mount Everest, Mount Blanc, and Mount Kilimanjaro. However, there are few exceptions to this rule:

the Jungfrau, the Matterhorn, and the Mount of Olives

Single Islands do not take the definite article but groups of islands do.

Sri Lanka, Australia, Samoa. But we say the Maldives Islands, the Andamans, the Hebrides.

The geographical names of countries do not take the defining adjective, nor do the names of towns and continents. Exceptions are:

the Hague, the Netherlands, the Congo, the Sudan, the Crimea, the Ukraine

The political titles of countries always take the definite article. Thus we have:

Sri Lanka (geographical) or the Republic of Sri Lanka (political)

America (geographical) or the United States of America (political)

Russia (geographical) the Soviet Union (political)

Great Britain (geographical) or the United Kingdom (political).





Cinemas, hotels, theatres, restaurants, clubs, taverns and public places all take the defining article 'the' except when their titles are proper personal names in the possessive case:

the Savoy Cinema, the Royal Theatre, the Rossini Restaurant, the Plaza Hotel and the All England Golf Club

But when we use a possessive, we do not use 'the.'

Smith's Hotel, White's Club, Luigi's Pizzeria, Romano's or His Majesty's Theatre

The names of ships always take 'the' before them as do the names of special trains and airplanes: the Queen Elizabeth, the Flying Scotsman, the Orient Express, the Concorde

Directions (north, south, northeast, etc.,) take 'the' when they are used as nouns.

**NOTE:**

the sun, the moon, the earth, the sky, the stars, the winds, the south wind, the northeast wind.

Groups of stars and planets usually take the:

the Great Bear, the Milky Way, and the Southern Cross but we say Orion's Belt

Named stars and planets do not usually take 'the':

Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Uranus

Very few streets take the before them although roads often do when their names show where the road goes to or comes from:

**Examples:**

Oxford Street is in London.

The Oxford road leads from London to Oxford.

We do not usually put 'the' before our ordinary meals:

breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner

However,

The dinner or the luncheon is an organized event of an association or committee for a particular purpose:





**Examples:**

My wife and daughter went to the dinner organized by the Rotary Club.

Note that when we write the date - 22 January, 10 May, etc. we say:  
the twenty-second of January, the tenth of May

It is important to note that there are a few instances when the omission of 'the' makes a difference to the meaning of the sentence:

**Examples:**

Jack goes to school (as a pupil). But his father goes to the school (to see the principal or for some other purpose).

My mother is in church (at a service). But my brother is in the Church. (He is a priest)

We have a friend in hospital (as a patient). But we have a friend in the hospital. (He is a doctor)

Even though it sounds complicated, after some practice, you will learn how to use the Definite Article correctly.

