



Using articles

Extra practice with a, an, the, or none

Japanese has no words for a or the, so in English it is easy to leave them out. But English needs them, and a reader notices at once when they are missing. The rule that catches most mistakes: one countable thing always needs an article. When in doubt, do not leave it out.

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1. One countable thing always needs a or the – even with an adjective in front. a method, an approach, the control group
 2. Plural: use the only for a known group. “the samples in this study” vs “samples can break”
 3. Uncountable: no article – unless of follows, then the. “reliability matters” vs “the reliability of this test”
 4. Names: no the – unless the name has of or an institution word. “Osaka University” vs “the University of Osaka”, “the WHO”
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SEE — *a or an? listen to the sound*

Write a or an in each gap. It is the sound that matters, not the letter.

1. This was _____ honest mistake in the calculation.
2. We propose _____ unified theory of the two effects.
3. The team ran _____ one-hour test under load. (say it aloud: “one” starts with a “w” sound)
4. Each subject completed _____ European travel survey. (“European” starts with a “yu” sound)

TRY — *a/an, the, or no article?*

Underline the correct choice. Think about the four rules above.

5. We designed (a / the / no article) survey to measure attitudes. (first mention)
6. (A / The / No article) results of the survey were surprising. (known, with “of”)
7. (A / The / No article) reliability is important in any test. (uncountable, no “of”)
8. The grant came from (a / the / no article) National Science Foundation. (institution name)

ACT — *add the missing articles*

Each sentence is missing one or more articles. Rewrite it correctly.

9. We developed model to predict demand.

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10. Researcher recorded result after each trial.

> -----

11. Accuracy of method depends on size of sample.

> -----

ACT — *names: with the, or without?*

Add the only where the name needs it. Some need nothing.

12. The study was led by a team at _____ Kyoto University.

13. The data were shared with _____ World Health Organization.

14. The samples were sent to _____ University of Manchester.

15. The conference was held in _____ Tokyo.

ACT — *find and fix the article error*

Each sentence has one article that is wrong or missing. Cross out the error and write the fix.

16. We used the new approach to analyse a data from the trial.

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17. Reliability of the instrument was the main concern.

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18. This paper presents the method that has never been tested before. (first mention – which article fits?)

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REFLECT — *judge the three versions*

Three writers report the same finding. Mark the best one, then say what is wrong with the other two.

_____ a. We observed effect in the control group.

_____ b. We observed an effect in the control group.

_____ c. We observed an effect in a control group.

Best: _____ What is wrong with the other two?

> -----



Using articles

Model answers and short explanations

SEE – a or an

1. an honest – the 'h' is silent, so it starts with a vowel sound.
2. a unified – 'unified' starts with a 'yu' sound, like 'you'.
3. a one-hour – 'one' starts with a 'w' sound.
4. a European – 'European' starts with a 'yu' sound.

TRY – a/an, the, or no article

5. a survey – one countable thing, first mention.
6. The results – a known group, with 'of the survey' following.
7. No article – 'reliability' is uncountable, with no 'of'.
8. the National Science Foundation – an institution name takes 'the'.

ACT – add the missing articles

9. We developed a model to predict demand.
10. The researcher recorded the result after each trial. (or 'a result' on first mention)
11. The accuracy of the method depends on the size of the sample.

ACT – names

12. Kyoto University – no 'the' (plain name).
13. the World Health Organization – institution word.
14. the University of Manchester – name with 'of'.
15. Tokyo – no 'the' (plain place name).

ACT – find and fix

16. ... to analyse the data – the data is known, so 'the', not 'a'.
17. The reliability of the instrument ... – uncountable, but 'of' follows, so 'the'.
18. ... presents a method ... – first mention, so 'a', not 'the'.

REFLECT – judge the three versions

- Best: b – 'an effect' (one countable thing, first mention) and 'the control group' (a known group).
a and c are both poor. 'a' drops the article before 'effect'. 'c' uses 'a control group', but the control group is a known, specific group, so it needs 'the'.

Source note. All sentences in this worksheet are original, written for teaching. The four article rules are informed by the Academic Phrasebank (John Morley, University of Manchester, 2023), 'A Note on Article Use'. No part of the Phrasebank PDF is reproduced here.