

Teaching Genuine Articles in English

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Some Practice Exercises with Articles

A) **Anaphoric use (previous mention of something/someone)**

Ex.: I attended **a** class about historic places in Boston, and I really enjoyed **the** class a lot.

Contextualized Review of Articles with Previous Mention:

Read this sample conversation in your pair or trio (doubling one part).

- S1: Not long ago I went to see a 3-D science fiction movie about two very different cultures. Can you guess the name of the movie?
- S2: The movie is called Avatar.
- S1: The action in the movie takes place on another planet. Do you know the name of the planet?
- S2: It takes place on (the planet of) Pandora.
- S1: What is the name of the indigenous people on that planet?
- S2: They are called the Navi/The name of the people is the Navi.
- S1: Do you know the name of the director?
- S2: The director's name is James Cameron./His name is James Cameron.
- S1: What are some main themes that the movie deals with?
- S2: The movie deals with the themes of intercultural conflict and the environment.

Now work in pairs (or trios) to complete the conversations below. One of you (Student 1) will be using the words below to complete sentences and ask your partner questions about a movie.

Conversation #1 (prompts)

- A) I recently saw ... movie about ... famous ship voyage in 1912.
... name of ... movie?
- B) There was ... actress in that movie who became very famous.
... name of ... actress?
- C) There was also ... actor in that film who also became a celebrity.
... name of ... actor?
- D) What happened to ... ship in ... movie?
- E) Which member of ... romantic couple survived, and why?
- F) What is one major theme ... movie?

Conversation #2 (prompts)

- A) ... movie about ...secret religious code
Can you guess ... name of the movie?
- B) ... a famous actor in ... movie.
What was ... name of ... actor?
- C) In that movie there was also ... famous actress.
... name of that actress?
- D) Most of ... action in ... movie happened in one city.
Do you know ... name of that city?
- E) Why does ... movie have that title?

Creative Extension:

Now it's your turn to think of an internationally known movie and ask your partner(s) 3-5 questions about it. Here are some ideas for questions: the movie stars (main actors or actresses) in it; the director; the setting or location; the central theme or topic; the setting (time and place); the name of the principal theme song.

Some film/Movie categories:

A drama, a comedy, a romantic movie, a horror movie, a mystery thriller, a spy movie, a musical, a dance movie, a science fiction film, a fantasy, an animated movie

B) Superlatives (using “the”) + adjective clause—review

Ex. for small groups or as a game (See samples below.)

Ex.:

Person A: What's the best ice cream flavor you've ever had?

Person B: The best ice cream flavor I've ever had is chocolate mousse.

OR: Chocolate mousse is the best ice cream flavor I've ever had.

- 1) Who's the best dancer you've ever seen on TV?
- 2) What's the most interesting tourist sight you've ever been to?
- 3) What's the most amazing museum you've ever visited?

C) Geographical Uses--a review activity after studying article rules

In small groups, ask or answer these questions using complete sentences.

Ex.:

A: What is the capital of the United States?

B: Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States (the U.S.).

- a) What is the capital of your country?
- b) What is the name of the place where you were born?
- c) What is the name of a body of water in your country?
- d) Massachusetts Bonus Question:

What is the official name of this state?

Geography Trivia Game (sample questions given below)

- 1) What is longest river in the world?
- 2) What is the tallest mountain in the world?
- 3) What is the widest river in the world?

D) Ordinals—“...the first ... to...”

In small groups or as a trivia game:

The teacher or a classmate will give you the name of a famous person, and you have to make a sentence using “the first person” about what that person did.

Ex.: George Washington

George Washington was the first person to become president of the U.S.

(a sampler available here)

- 1) Barack Obama
- 2) Kathryn Bigelow
- 3) Mahatma Gandhi
- 4) Helen Keller
- 5) Albert Einstein
- 6) Rosa Parks
- 7) Alexander Graham Bell
- 8) Yuri Gargarin
- 9) Oprah Winfrey

E) Abbreviations for Proper Names with “The”

What do these abbreviations stand for? (examples provided here)

Consult a dictionary or the Internet if necessary.

Ex.: NHL NHL stands for the National Hockey League.

MFA UN NBA NFL NCAA UNICEF NATO UMass.-Boston
OPEC EU CNN UC-Berkeley UConn PBS BU BSO

F) Proper Nouns: Names of Movies

Small-Group Work

Expand these word sets into movie titles using articles and any other missing grammar words. Use the Internet to check any answers that you need to. Some words may be out of order.

(examples given here)

Locker, Hurt	King, Lion	Matrix
Man, Serious	Money, Color	Caribbean, Pirates
Empire, Back, Strikes	Happyness, Pursuit	Egypt, Prince

Think of other movie titles that have “a,” “an,” or “the” in them, and write down key content words in the title without the articles and prepositions, out of order. Then ask a classmate to guess what the movies are.

G) Famous Teams/Groups

In Pairs/Trios:

(sample items)

Name these specific teams/groups:

- A Boston baseball team
- A Boston basketball team
- A New England football team
- A New York baseball team
- A Boston hockey team
- A Chicago basketball team
- A California basketball team
- A New Orleans football team
- A New England soccer team
- Mo, Larry, and Curly
- John, Paul, Ringo, and George
- Placido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, and José Carreras
- Venus and Serena

H) Famous Movie Lines

Work in a small group to complete these famous quotations from various movies. Then discuss the characters, which movies they are from, and what the contexts/situations are. Write down the information in the table below.

- 1) "Show me _____ money!"
- 2) "Houston, we have _____ problem."
- 3) "May _____ Force be with you."
- 4) "I love _____ smell of napalm in the morning."
- 5) "You can't handle the truth."
- 6) "You're gonna need _____ bigger boat."
- 7) "Mama always said life was like _____ box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."
- 8) "To be or not to be. That is _____ question..."
- 9) "Gentleman, you can't fight here. This is _____ War Room."
- 10) "Toto, I've (got) _____ feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."
- 11) "Of all _____ gin joints in all _____ towns in all _____ world, she walks into mine."
- 12) "I'm going to make him _____ offer he can't refuse."

Quotation	Movie title	Actor/Actress/Character	Situation/Meaning
#1			

I) Famous Nonsequiturs/Malapropisms from Yogi Berra

Each small group will be assigned one or more of these illogical quotations below. Your task is to read them, figure out their meaning, and report back to the class.

- 1) "It's not the heat, it's the humility."
- 2) "In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is."
- 3) "If you come to a fork in the road, take it."
- 4) "Always go to other people's funerals, otherwise they won't come to yours."
- 5) "Baseball is ninety percent mental and the other half is physical."
- 6) "You observe a lot by just watching."
- 7) "A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore."

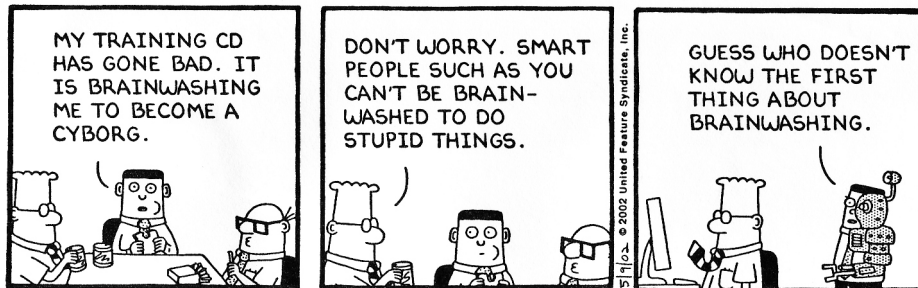
J) Exercise with Pictures and Quotes—Computer Work

Your small group will be given the job of researching a famous quotation. Your job is to do the following: a) identify who said it; b) type the quotation in a word processing file and find a picture of that person on the Internet that you will insert into the document with the quote; c) watch or listen to a short sound byte on the Internet that has the quotation in it; d) then report back to the class about what you learned about the quote.

(Samples sentence items)

- 1) "I have a dream."
- 2) "I am the greatest."
- 3) "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

K) Articles in Humor—"Dilbert" by Scott Adams



Read the text of the Dilbert comic strip above, and think about answers to these questions:

- 1) What does the employee think happened with his training CD?
- 2) What do you think "brainwashing" means?
- 3) What advice does Dilbert give his co-worker?
- 4) How do we know that Dilbert's advice is wrong in this case?
- 5) Where does the action take place?
- 6) What is the main idea of this comic strip?
- 7) Find examples of count/non-count nouns that may have articles.
- 8) Why do you think "first" has the article "the" before it?

A Few Actual Writing Excerpts with Errors In Article Usage by Advanced-Level International College Students

Journal Entries (Nationality in Parentheses)

About Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

I realized that I have it all wrong; he was peaceful political activist who had a dream of living without racism or segregation. (Saudi)

Our effort will be the salvation of all races and lead to a world peace. (Korean)

He is now consider a martyr and he's an icon of the human rights. (Mexican)

I read about Montgomery Bus Boycott... They couldn't image there will be one day that white young man would give his seat to old black man. Such as today we couldn't image at that time who could have the seat depend on his skin color! (Taiwanese)

About a Field Trip to the MFA:

My class had a chance to visit Museum of Fine Arts on Oct. 9th... With the guide, it was a great chance to understand MFA and more English... I found a portrait in 19th century European room is very attracting. (Taiwanese)

Anyway, I enjoyed having a class outside of classroom! (Korean)

I appreciate that I had an opportunity to touch the culture of the ancient Egypt. (Japanese)

Selected List of Sources

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