

Generalizations & Descriptions: Occupations and Professions

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Job titles vocabulary, Articles with professions, Defining what people do, A number of / a few, Some vs. all, Indefinite quantities, Talking about things in general, Omitting articles with plurals, Generic statements, Adjective + noun order

1. Grammar Theory

A. Articles with Occupations

When we tell someone what our job is, or describe someone else's job, we use the indefinite article **a/an**.

- *I am **a** teacher.* (NOT: *I am teacher.*)
- *She is **an** accountant.*

B. Generalizations (Zero Article vs. The)

When we talk about a group of people or things **in general**, we use the **plural noun without 'the'** (Zero Article).

- **Engineers** design bridges. (All engineers/Engineers in general).
- NOT: ~~The engineers~~ design bridges. (This would refer to a specific group of engineers we mentioned before).

C. Quantifiers: Some, All, A Few, A Number Of

We use quantifiers to describe indefinite quantities of people within a profession.

- **All + Plural Noun:** 100% of the group. (*All doctors have studied medicine.*)
- **Not all + Plural Noun:** Used to correct a stereotype. (*Not all lawyers are rich.*)
- **Some + Plural Noun:** A part of the group, but not everyone. (*Some journalists work on TV, but others write for newspapers.*)
- **A few / A number of:** A small but significant quantity. (*A number of employees are unhappy.*)

D. Adjective Order (Physical Appearance)

When describing people, adjectives usually follow a specific order before the noun.

Opinion → **Size** → **Physical Quality/Shape** → **Age** → **Color** → **Origin** → **Noun**

Common Order for Hair: Length → Style → Color

- *She has **long curly blonde** hair.*

Common Order for General Appearance: Opinion → Size/Height

- *He is a **handsome tall** man.*

E. Defining Relative Clauses

We often define jobs using **is someone who/that** or **is a person who/that**.

- *A surgeon is someone **who** operates on people.*

2. Practice

Instruction: Complete the sentences using the correct articles (a/an/Ø), quantifiers, adjective order, or the correct form of the verbs/words in parentheses. Pay attention to the cues provided.

1. My brother is _____ (electrician), so he can help you fix the wiring in your house.
2. _____ (journalists) usually have to work under very tight deadlines.
3. The suspect was described as a _____ (tall / thin / dangerous) man with a scar on his cheek.
4. _____ (not/all/musician) play classical music; many prefer jazz or rock.
5. She has _____ (brown / beautiful / long) hair and green eyes.
6. _____ (you/know) if _____ (mechanics) generally earn a good salary?
7. A flight attendant is a person who _____ (serve) passengers and ensures safety on a plane.
8. While most staff members are happy, _____ (some/employee) are complaining about the new schedule.
9. He is a _____ (judge), so he must make very difficult decisions every day.
10. _____ (architects) need to have good drawing skills?
11. I met a _____ (young / brilliant / Japanese) scientist at the conference yesterday.
12. A receptionist _____ (not/design) buildings; they answer the phone and greet visitors.
13. Only _____ (a few) people passed the entrance exam for the police academy.
14. Look at that _____ (middle-aged / short) lady over there; I think she is the CEO.
15. _____ (vegetarians) do not eat meat, but _____ (some) eat dairy products.

Answer Key

1. **an electrician** (Use 'an' before vowel sounds for singular professions).
2. **Journalists** (Zero article for generalizations).
3. **dangerous tall thin** (Opinion -> Size -> Shape/Build). *Note: 'Tall thin' is standard, 'dangerous' is opinion.*
4. **Not all musicians** (Negative generalization).
5. **beautiful long brown** (Opinion -> Length -> Color).
6. **Do you know / mechanics** (Question auxiliary / Zero article for generalization).
7. **serves** (Defining clause: singular subject).
8. **some employees** (Quantifier + plural noun).
9. **judge** (Use 'a' before consonant sounds).
10. **Do architects** (Question asking for a generalization).
11. **brilliant young Japanese** (Opinion -> Age -> Origin).
12. **does not design** (Negative definition).
13. **a few** (Quantifier indicating a small number).
14. **short middle-aged** (Size -> Age).
15. **Vegetarians / some** (Zero article for generalization / Quantifier referring to a subset).