

Focus: The for specific things, A/an for 'one of many', Describing kinds or types, Identifying unique objects in a room, The bank / the post office, The doctor / the dentist, The station, Talking about the manager, Once a week / three times a day, Prices per unit (e.g., £1.50 a kilo)

At the Intermediate (B1) level, using articles (**a, an, the**) correctly depends on whether you are talking about something specifically known to the listener or something general. We also use articles in special fixed expressions regarding frequency and rates.

1. Specific vs. General (The vs. A/An)

- **General (A/An):** Use **a** or **an** when you mention a countable noun for the first time, or when it represents "one of many." The listener does not know exactly which one you mean, or it doesn't matter.
 - *Example:* "I need to buy **a** new pen." (Any new pen will do.)
 - *Example:* "Is there **a** hotel near here?" (Any hotel.)
- **Specific (The):** Use **the** when the listener knows exactly which thing you are talking about. This happens when the object is unique in the room or has been mentioned before.
 - *Example:* "Can you close **the** door?" (The specific door in this room.)
 - *Example:* "Where is **the** remote control?" (The specific remote for this TV.)

2. Jobs, Titles, and Roles

- **Describing a Job (A/An):** When describing someone's profession, use **a/an**.
 - *Example:* "My sister is **a** teacher." (One of many teachers.)
- **Specific Titles (The):** When referring to a specific role within a specific context (like a company), use **the**.
 - *Example:* "I need to speak to **the** manager." (The specific manager of this shop.)

3. Fixed Expressions: Places and Professionals

We often use **the** with certain public places and professionals, even if we don't say exactly which one. We view these as institutions or services.

- **Places: the** bank, **the** post office, **the** station, **the** cinema, **the** theatre.
 - *Example:* "He is going to **the** bank to withdraw money."
- **Professionals: the** doctor, **the** dentist.
 - *Example:* "I have a toothache, so I am seeing **the** dentist tomorrow."

4. Frequency and Rates (Per)

We use **a** or **an** to express frequency (how often) or rates (prices/speed). In this context, **a/an** means "per".

- **Frequency:** once **a** week, three times **a** day, twice **a** month.
 - *Example:* "I go to the gym twice **a** week."
- **Rates:** £2.50 **a** kilo, 60 miles **an** hour.
 - *Example:* "These tomatoes are £3 **a** kilo."

Practice

Complete the sentences using a, an, or the.

Instructions: Read the context carefully. Decide if the noun is general (one of many/frequency/rate) or specific (unique/fixed expression).

1. The doctor told him to take this medicine three times _____ day.
2. Excuse me, can you tell me where _____ nearest bank is?
3. She works in an office, but she isn't _____ manager.
4. We didn't buy the grapes because they were £5 _____ kilo!
5. Can you please close _____ window? It is getting cold in here.
6. My brother is looking for a job. He wants to be _____ accountant.
7. I need to go to _____ station to pick up my train tickets.
8. Do you have _____ pen I could borrow? Mine has run out of ink.
9. I have a terrible headache. I think I need to see _____ doctor.
10. We usually go on holiday once _____ year, usually in August.
11. Where is _____ teacher? The class started five minutes ago.
12. He was driving at 100 kilometers _____ hour when the police stopped him.
13. I didn't like the film, but I thought _____ music was beautiful.
14. Is there _____ post office near your house?
15. Could you turn on _____ light? It's too dark to read.

Answer Key

1. **a** (Frequency/Rate: "per day")
2. **the** (Specific: "the nearest one")
3. **the** (Specific Title/Role)
4. **a** (Price/Rate: "per kilo")
5. **the** (Specific: Unique object in the room)
6. **an** (Job/Profession: General)
7. **the** (Fixed Expression/Place)
8. **a** (General: "Any pen")
9. **the** (Fixed Expression/Professional)
10. **a** (Frequency: "per year")
11. **the** (Specific Person: Known in context)
12. **an** (Rate: "per hour")
13. **the** (Specific: The music of that specific film)
14. **a** (General: "One of many")
15. **the** (Specific: Unique object in the room)