

Higher Education Language & Presentation Support

# Grammar 3: Articles, Prepositions + Punctuation

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# HELPS

(Higher Education Language & Presentation Support)

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## David Sotir - Advisor



- Articles are modifiers that appear before nouns and noun phrases.
- The articles in the English language are *the* and *a/an*.
- Some noun and noun phrases do not use articles.

# Articles

To know when to use or not use an article  
some rules are needed:

1. Is it definite or indefinite?
2. Is it singular or plural?
3. Is the noun countable or uncountable?

# Rules: a/an & the



## countable

|          | <b>definite</b> | <b>indefinite</b> |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------|
| singular | the             | a, an             |
| plural   | the             | ∅                 |

## uncountable

|  | <b>definite</b> | <b>indefinite</b> |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|
|  | the             | ∅                 |

If the noun is definite, it always take the article *the*; if the noun is indefinite, it never takes the article *the*.

# Rules: a/an & the

- Using *a* or *an* depends on the sound (not letter) that begins the next word
  - *a* + singular noun beginning with a consonant, consonant sound or pronounced 'h'
    - *a* boy; *a* car; *a* user (the U sounds like Y in you.); *a* university; *a* horse; *a* historical event
  - *an* + singular noun beginning with a vowel sound (not letter) or silent 'h'
    - *an* elephant; *an* idiot; *an* hour; *an* honour
  - These rules also apply when you use acronyms
    - *an* ITRP student; *a* UTS student

*a or an*



- \_\_\_\_ paper-based system is very time consuming and error prone.
- EDI can suffer more from \_\_\_\_ breakdown than the manual system.
- Organisations should be ready for \_\_\_\_ increased workload.
- It is \_\_\_\_ museum's task to explore contemporary culture.

# Practice

- Comma
- Semi-colon
- Colon
- Parentheses (Brackets)
- Dash
- Apostrophe

# Punctuation

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- Introductory word/s, phrases or subordinate clauses need a comma before the main idea.
- Additional information added to the main idea
- Run-ons – Common Mistakes
- Listing things
- Resolving ambiguity

# Comma

- Introductory word/s, phrases or subordinate clauses need a comma before the main idea. These are not complete thoughts: they simply introduce the main subject and verb.
- *Generally, teachers are friendly and helpful.*
- *Throughout his early life, Mozart showed signs of genius.*
- *Dissatisfied with his fame, the celebrity went on a reality show.*
- *As far as the economy is concerned, the mining boom accounts for a large amount of the revenue.*

# Comma



- **Additional information added to the main idea**

Two commas can be used to separate additional information within the sentence, but it is separate from the primary subject and verb of the sentence.

The words within the commas are not necessary to understand the rest of the sentence.

- *Bob Mills, a sophomore from Raleigh, was the only North Carolina native at the Japanese food festival in Cary.*
- *Aaron thought he could see the future, not the past, in the wrinkles on his skin.*

# Comma

## Run-ons – Common Mistakes

- My professor was very mad I will try harder next time.
- You gave an excellent presentation, it is a pity your exam results were low.
- You wore a lovely hat but didn't wear anything else.

# Find the Mistake



## Listing things

- I went to Australia, New Zealand, Italy and Malta.
- A good student listens to his teachers without yawning, reads once in a while and writes papers before they are due.

# Comma

## Resolving ambiguity

- If the information in the sentence can be interpreted in different ways then use a comma to help separate the information. i.e. Create bundles of information by using a comma to separate them. The aim is to make the sentence clear to the reader.

# Comma



- Separating items in a list where the items are long or complicated
- Replacing a linking word to suggest a strong relationship between the two independent clauses

# Semi-colon

- **Separating items in a list where the items are long or complicated**
- You may use the library on condition that your membership is paid quarterly; that you always return books to their rightful place after using them; that you pay any fines for books returned late; and that you are quiet when using the facilities.

# Semi-Colon



Replacing a linking word to suggest a strong relationship between the two independent clauses.

- The European Union's history consists of two stages; its original form was known as the European Economic Community (EEC).

# Semi-colon

- Introducing material (e.g. quotation, data, figure, diagram, text ) that explains, expands, summarises the comment that precedes it
- Introducing a list which is long and/or complicated, or which is made more conspicuous intentionally
- To separate the subtitle from the title.

# Colon



Introducing material (e.g. quotation, data, diagram, text ) that explains, expands, summarises the comment that precedes it.

- *Shakespeare's most famous quote says: "To be or not to be."*
- The results are as follows:
  - 80% of students passed
  - 20% of students failed
- *Life is a puzzle: trying to work it out is half the fun.*

# Colon

Introducing a list which is long and/or complicated, or to intentionally draw more attention to it.

- *We covered many aspects in our writing class: grammar, punctuation, and voice.*
- *My husband gave me the things I needed most: companionship and quiet.*


**RULE:** The clause before the colon must be an independent clause.

# Colon



- *The very best peaches are: those that are grown in the great state of Georgia.*
- *My favourite cake is made of: carrots, flour, butter, eggs, and cream cheese icing.*
- *There are many different types of paper, including: college ruled, wide ruled, and plain copy paper.*

# Find the mistake



A colon can be used to separate the subtitle from the title.

- Greece: Ancient Times to Modern
- Language: Barriers of European speakers

# Colon



- Referencing e.g. (Malvin, 2012)
- Indicating information that is extra to the main idea such as giving an example or additional detail, qualifying a point, referring to another part of the text.

## Parentheses (brackets)

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Parenttheses ( ) indicate the additional information is less important than the material in the sentence.

Dashes - show the additional information is equally important to the material in the sentence.

- *Everything I saw in my new city – from the crashing waves at the beach to the jewelled harbour – brought tears to my eyes.*

# Parenttheses and dashes



- Contracted forms should not be used in academic English. Eg can not.
- We use apostrophes before or after possessives. Eg. The girl's mother, James's car
- We do not use apostrophes with possessive determiners and pronouns. eg. The money is ours. The baby had opened its presents.
- Used in the plurals of letters, numbers & abbreviations. Eg A lot of students got C's. GP's, 1970's.

# Apostrophe

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- **At** is used to talk about a large place or position at a point. e.g. Turn left at the next intersection. The train stops at Brisbane.
- **At** is used before proper names of buildings or organisations, when commenting on the activity to occur there or before names of group activities. e.g. Shop at Myers. (I was in a shop). I saw Macbeth at the theatre. I was at play group/tennis/university.
- **On** is used for position on a surface. e.g. It's on the table. It's on Lake Eyre
- **In** is used for position inside a large area. e.g. I was in the bush. Let's go in the office. I live in Sydney.

## Prepositions at/on/in: Place



- **At + clock time** e.g. at dinner time, at 4pm
- **In+ part of day** e.g. Let's go in the afternoon
- **On+ particular day** e.g. I'll email you on Thursday, I'm seeing her on Saturday afternoon.
- **At+ weekend, public holiday (the entire holiday)** e.g. Come at Christmas on Christmas day.
- **In + longer period** e.g. It was in the first week of March. It was made in the 18th century. He died in 1930.

**N.B.** No preposition is used if the day/year has **each, every, last, next, this** before it. e.g. I go to York every Christmas, I'll see you next Monday afternoon.

## Prepositions at/on/in: time