## A / an, the and zero article 2

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A	We use a / an to say what a person's job is, was, or will be:  She was a company director when she retired.  Against her parents' wishes, she wants to be a journalist.  However, when we give a person's job title, or their unique position, we use the or zero article (i.e. no article), not a / an. Compare:  She's been appointed (the) head of the company. and  I'm a production manager at Fino. (= there may be more than one production manager)  After the position of, the post of, or the role of we use zero article before a job title:  Dr Simons has taken on the position of Head of Department.
В	We usually use zero article (i.e. no article) before the name of an individual person or place. However, we use the —  when there are two people with the same name to specify which one we mean:  That's not the Stephen Fraser I went to school with.  but compare 'There was a Stephen Fraser in my class.' (= a person named Stephen Fraser)  when we want to emphasise that the person we are referring to is the most famous person with that name. Used this way, the is stressed and pronounced /ði:/:  Do they mean the Neil Armstrong, or someone else?
	with an adjective to describe a person, or another noun which tells us their job:  the late Michael Jackson (the) artist Joseph Turner ('the' is sometimes left out, particularly in journalism) when we talk about a family as a whole:  The Robinsons are away this weekend.
C	Note that a / an, or sometimes zero article, is used with a name when referring to the particular excellent qualities of the person named:  Majid plays tennis well, but he'll never be (a) Roger Federer.  We also use a / an when we refer to an individual example of a product made by a particular manufacturer (e.g I've just bought a Mercedes) or a work by a particular artist (e.g. Do you think it could be a Van Gogh / a Rembrandt?).  You can use a / an before a person's name if you don't know the person yourself. Compare:  Dr Lee is here for you. (= I know Dr Lee) and  There's a Dr Amy Lee on the phone. (= I haven't heard of her before) Do you want to talk to her?
D	In stories and jokes in conversation, <b>this</b> is commonly used instead of <b>a / an</b> to introduce a new person or thing. Using <b>this</b> highlights the person or thing as the topic of what is to come next:  As I was walking along, <b>this</b> spider (= a spider) landed on my head, and  This man (= a man) goes into a chemist and he says
E	We use the before a superlative adjective (the biggest, the most expensive, etc.) when the superlative adjective is followed by a noun or defining phrase:  He is the finest young player around at the moment.  However, we can often leave out the, particularly in an informal style, when there is no noun or defining phrase after the superlative adjective. Compare:  A: Why did you decide to stay in this hotel?  B: It was (the) cheapest. and It was the cheapest I could find.

## **Exercises**

- 46.1 If necessary, correct any mistakes in these sentences. If they are already correct, write ✓. 🕰
  - 1 She was determined to be author one day.
  - 2 She recently became the minister in the new government.
  - 3 A: What make is your computer? B: It's Mac.
  - 4 I found myself talking to George Clooney! Not George Clooney, of course, but someone with the same name.
  - 5 I didn't even know Clara was interested in art until I heard that she owns Van Gogh.
  - 6 I've been offered the position of Director of Personnel.
  - 7 We're going on holiday with Nielsens.
  - 8 He's really keen on athletics. He likes to think of himself as the Usain Bolt.
- 46.2 Put a / an, the or zero article (-) in the spaces. Give all possible answers.

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- 2 Leon's \_\_\_\_ manager of his local football team.
- 3 She has been appointed ...... Minister for Industry.
- 4 A special award was given to \_\_\_\_\_\_novelist Ian McMurphy.
- 6 We met our good friend \_\_\_\_\_ Eliza Borg when we were in \_\_\_\_ Malta.
- 7 When Lucia was young she knew \_\_\_\_\_ Picasso.
- 8 \_\_\_\_Linda Green is outside. Do you want to see her?
- 46.3) If the italicised the can be left out of these sentences, put brackets around it. 📧
  - It's the best ice-cream I've ever tasted.
  - 2 Rodrigo's boat wasn't the most elegant in the harbour, but it was certainly the biggest.
  - 3 I thought the second competitor was the best, even though he didn't win a prize.
  - 4 This is by far the most valuable painting in the collection.
  - 5 A: Why did you ask Martina to go first? B: Because she's the oldest.
  - 6 Sapphires occur in a variety of colours, but blue ones are the most valuable.
  - 7 The Pacific is the biggest ocean in the world.
  - 8 It's supposed to be the oldest post office in the country.
- Complete the email with a / an, the, zero article or this. Give alternatives where possible.

  Units 45 & 46

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