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Articles: *the* before general concepts

1 Tick the correct sentence in each pair.

- 1 a Some people worry about the negative effects of mobile phones on brain.
b Some people worry about the negative effects of mobile phones on the brain.
- 2 a We need to look at factors such as the availability of health care.
b We need to look at factors such as availability of health care.

We use *the* before nouns which describe a general type of thing rather than a specific example of that thing:

*These are problems for students living away from **the family**.*

*We don't know the effects of such chemicals on **the body**.*

*The role of **the student** at university level varies greatly from country to country.*

*Most of our business is carried out over **the telephone**.*

The is also used before abstract nouns which describe a situation, a quality, a process or a change. These words are often followed by *of something*:

*There is a problem with **the availability** of clean water in some villages.*

The distribution of income is uneven in most countries.

*On the whole, **the standard** of living is better in urban areas.*

*Many residents complained about **the frequency** of bus services.*

*This advance was brought about by **the development** of antibiotics.*

*He made a number of recommendations for **the improvement** of staff training.*

★ We use *the development/improvement, etc. of something* to describe a general process of change, but *developments/improvements, etc. in something* to describe specific changes:

*We try to keep up-to-date with new **developments in** information technology.*

2 Correct the mistake below.

Doctors always stress importance of a balanced diet.

Doctors always stress

3 Are these sentences right or wrong? Correct those containing mistakes.

- 1 A diet high in cholesterol is bad for heart.
- 2 The introduction of computerised systems led to an increase in unemployment.
- 3 We all benefit from development of new technologies.
- 4 We were unhappy about quality of the food available.
- 5 Last year the airline saw a 20% improvement in delays.
- 6 There have been changes in the relationship between the teacher and the student.
- 7 Rates vary depending on standard of accommodation you choose.
- 8 She focused on the role of a family in a child's education.

2 Articles: *a/an* before noun phrases

1 Tick the correct sentence in each pair.

- 1 a The company has captured a significant share of the market.
 b The company has captured significant share of the market.
- 2 a I think they are also right to certain extent.
 b I think they are also right to a certain extent.

Don't forget to include *a/an* before an adjective + singular noun combination:

He clearly has a good understanding of the issues.

Many students have a part-time job while studying.

Notice the position of adverbs (*very, really, quite, etc.*) in these phrases:

We have a very high percentage of women working in senior government posts.

There was a really good atmosphere.

In my view, this is quite a strong argument.

Some common noun phrases to be careful with:

- *to a certain extent/degree: I agree with you to a certain degree.*
- *a wide range/variety: We have a wide range of books to choose from.*
- *a(n) large/small/equal number/amount: an equal number of men and women*
- *a high/large/small/greater proportion/percentage: a small proportion of patients*
- *a long time: I haven't seen her for a long time.*

2 Correct the mistake below.

All competitors should have equal chance of winning.

All competitors should

3 Use the words below in the same order to form correct sentences, adding any necessary articles or prepositions.

- 1 Only / small / number / troublemakers / were / responsible for / problems.
- 2 Computers / play / very / important / role / education / nowadays.
- 3 She / can't / afford to / study / full-time / basis.
- 4 Teenagers / should be / allowed / greater / degree / freedom.
- 5 They / have / slightly / different / approach to / studying.
- 6 We / had / one-week / intensive / training / course.
- 7 There / has been / gradual / increase / number / thefts.
- 8 They / offer / quite / wide / variety / courses.

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When do I use capital letters?

1 Tick the correct sentence in each pair.

- 1 a She explained that Thai food often requires a lot of ingredients.
b She explained that thai food often requires a lot of ingredients.
- 2 a Sixty percent of students enrolled at the university are male.
b Sixty percent of students enrolled at the University are male.

Capital letters are always used for nouns in the following groups:

- countries: *Germany, the United States, Britain, the Czech Republic*, etc.
- towns, cities, states and regions: *Tokyo, Paris, Texas, New South Wales*, etc.
- nationalities, ethnic groups and religions – referring to people, languages or things from a country, region or culture:

Can you speak Chinese? You can hear he's a South African from his accent.

a Buddhist temple I'd like to learn more about Asian culture.

- months and days of the week: *October, 9th April, Tuesday, Sunday*, etc.

- ★ Capital letters are not generally used for the seasons: *spring, summer, autumn, winter*

- names of organisations and institutions: *the United Nations, the National Museum*

Where a word like *museum, university, station* or *hospital* is part of the name of an institution, it has a capital letter: *Harvard University, Karachi Station, Rome Airport*
However, when these words are not part of a name, they do not have a capital letter:

They built a new 100-bed hospital in the provincial capital.

He first joined the company in 2018. The government will announce their plans next week.

- ★ Also remember: *the Earth* (but not *the World*)

2 Correct the mistake below.

I'm arriving at Heathrow airport on 12th January
at 5.30 in the morning.

I'm arriving at

3 Add the correct punctuation and capital letters in the sentences below.

- 1 visitors to china should remember not to give a clock as a present
- 2 these customs are common in muslim countries such as saudi arabia
- 3 she started work for microsoft in july 2016
- 4 i went to university in geneva in switzerland
- 5 we took a taxi from york station to the royal york hotel in the city centre
- 6 this is a photo of me on wall street when we visited new york last summer
- 7 the red cross works together with governments and other organisations worldwide
- 8 she hopes to compete for france in the european championships in august

TEST TEST 1

1 Underline the correct article: *a/an, the* or – (no article).

- 1 This test measures *a/the/-* concentration of acid in *a/the/-* stomach.
- 2 It took *an/the/-* incredibly long time for the results to be announced.
- 3 There have been *an/the/-* improvements in *a/the/-* quality as well as *an/the/-* efficiency.
- 4 *A/The/-* high percentage of businesses fail in the first year.
- 5 The study found that *a/the/-* significant number of homes had two cars.
- 6 This shows *a/the/-* sharp decline in *a/the/-* proportion of aid allocated to health.
- 7 He studied the role of *an/the/-* extended family in caring for older people.
- 8 These reforms have succeeded to *a/the/-* certain extent.
- 9 All children should receive *a/the/-* basic education.
- 10 The HR department deals with *a/the/-* recruitment of new staff.
- 11 What is *a/the/-* significance of these figures?
- 12 She has *an/the/-* excellent communication skills.

2 The text below contains a number of mistakes with articles (*the, a/an*) and capital letters. Find the mistakes and correct them.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established on 14 December, 1950. It was set up to protect refugees throughout the World and to help in resolution of refugee problems. It has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, but the Organisation has a staff of around 16,800 in 134 countries. Its main aim is to safeguard rights and well-being of refugees. Large proportion of the 25.9 million refugees UNHCR helps have left countries experiencing war and unrest, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Around 80% of the world's refugees live in countries neighbouring their home country. In 2020, Turkey, Pakistan and Uganda were the top three host nations.

3 Put the words below together to make three complete texts, adding any capital letters, punctuation and extra words (such as articles or prepositions) necessary.

- 1 odile is french she was born lyon 21 september 1968 she moved britain 20 years ago and now has british citizenship she speaks english fluently but she still has quite strong french accent
- 2 corinne lives with her husband steve near melbourne australia steve is australian but corinne has german mother and american father she was born united states and met steve while they were both working europe
- 3 andré is travel photographer he lives switzerland but he spends large part of the year travelling around world last summer he went on long trip south america to photograph ancient inca temples

4 Rewrite the sentences below using the word given and making any changes necessary to keep the meaning the same.

- 1 The council wants to encourage new businesses to develop.
development
- 2 His main role is to assess how good the service is for customers.
quality
- 3 There has been an increase in the amount of goods transported by road.
transportation
- 4 Whether mothers return to work often depends on whether childcare is available.
availability
- 5 Many of the changes are due to the fact that tourism has grown in the region.
growth