

GRAMMAR GUIDE · IELTS

Articles

a, an, the — or nothing at all.

Fix the most common mistake in IELTS writing.

Writing**Accuracy****Band 7+**

Why this matters for your band

Articles – **a**, **an**, **the**, or **none at all** – are the **single most common error** in IELTS Writing. Each small slip quietly lowers your **accuracy** score. The good news: a few clear rules cover almost every case. Learn them and your writing instantly reads as more accurate and natural.

What the examiner rewards

Band 7 asks for “frequent error-free sentences.” Article mistakes are so common that fixing them is one of the fastest ways to raise your accuracy. Examiners notice both the missing the and the unnecessary one.

How to use this guide

1

Learn the four choices

a, an, the, and the ‘zero’ article (no article). Every noun you write needs one of these.

2

Use the decision guide

Three quick questions tell you which to use. Keep the guide beside you as you write.

3

Do the tasks

Fill gaps, complete a paragraph, and correct errors – then note the rules you keep missing.

First, countable or uncountable?

Before you choose an article, decide what kind of noun you have. This one step prevents most mistakes.

TYPE	BEHAVIOUR	EXAMPLES
Countable	Singular or plural; the singular must have an article/determiner	a job · the job · jobs · three jobs
Uncountable	No plural and no a/an; used alone or with the	information · advice · water · traffic

RULE A **countable singular** noun can **never stand alone**. Write a car, the car, or my car — never just “car”.

Watch these **uncountable** nouns. They are countable in many languages, but **not** in English:

x → ✓ an information → **information** / a piece of information

x → ✓ advices → **advice**

UNCOUNTABLE information · advice · research · knowledge · equipment · traffic · pollution · progress · money · work

a / an, and the

Once a noun is countable and singular, this is the choice you make most often.

a / an — one of many, first mention, not specific

Use **a/an** when the noun is countable, singular and **not yet specific** to the reader — a first mention, or one example of many.

A / AN She works as **a** teacher.

A / AN I read **a** useful article yesterday.

SOUND RULE **an** before a vowel sound: an hour, an MBA · **a** before a consonant sound: a university, a European

the — specific, known, or unique

Use **the** when the reader knows **which one** you mean.

USE THE WHEN...	EXAMPLE
It was mentioned before	I read a book. The book was excellent.
Only one exists	the sun · the government · the environment · the internet
A phrase makes it specific	the number of cars · the book on the table
Superlatives / ordinals	the best result · the first time

The 'zero' article & decision guide

Very often the correct choice is **no article at all** – especially when you speak in general.

RULE Use **no article** for **general** plural and uncountable nouns: **Cars** cause pollution. · **Education** is important. Add the only when you mean **specific** ones.

ZERO Most countries, cities, names: France · London · Mount Everest (but the USA, the UK, the Netherlands)

ZERO Meals, languages, sports: have lunch · speak English · play tennis

GENERAL VS SPECIFIC Life is hard. (general) / **The** life of a nurse is hard. (specific)

QUICK DECISION GUIDE

ASK YOURSELF...	THEN USE
Countable & singular? It must have one.	a / an / the
Does the reader know the exact one?	the
First mention, one of many?	a / an
General plural or uncountable?	– (no article)

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ✗ Technology plays important role.
- ✓ Technology plays **an** important role.
Countable singular (role) needs an article.
- ✗ The pollution is a problem in the modern cities.
- ✓ Pollution is a problem in modern cities.
General uncountable and general plural take **no** article.
- ✗ I want to be doctor.
- ✓ I want to be **a** doctor.
A job after be takes a/an.
- ✗ The most people agree.
- ✓ Most people agree.
Most + a general plural – no the.

Band 5 → Band 7: fix the articles

Real IELTS sentences with typical article errors, corrected. Read each pair and name the rule that applies.

BAND 5 In modern world, computer is very useful tool.



BAND 7 In **the** modern world, **a** computer is **a** very useful tool.

the modern world (unique) · a computer / a tool (countable singular, general).

BAND 5 Pollution from the cars is damaging the nature.



BAND 7 Pollution from cars is damaging **the environment**.

cars in general → no article · nature takes no the; use the environment.

BAND 5 Government should give people advices about the health.



BAND 7 **The** government should give people **advice** about health.

the government (unique) · advice is uncountable · health in general → no article.

BAND 5 The education is the key for a success.



BAND 7 Education is **the** key to **success**.

education / success in general → no article · the key to... is the natural phrase.

TASK 1 Choose a, an, the or — (no article)

Write the correct article in each gap. Use — if no article is needed.

1. She is _____ engineer. _____
2. _____ water in this river is polluted. _____
3. _____ money cannot buy happiness. _____
4. I saw _____ interesting documentary last night. _____
5. _____ Everest is the highest mountain on Earth. _____
6. He is _____ best student in the class. _____
7. _____ cars produce a great deal of pollution. _____
8. We stayed at _____ hotel near the station. _____

TASK 2 Correct the uncountable noun

Each phrase has an error with a/an or a wrong plural. Write the correct form.

1. an advice _____
2. many informations _____
3. a research _____
4. two equipments _____
5. a good news _____
6. some knowledges _____

TASK 3 Complete the paragraph

Write **a**, **an**, **the** or **–** in each gap.

_____1_____ technology has transformed the way we live. Today, almost everyone owns _____2_____ smartphone, and _____3_____ internet connects people across _____4_____ world. However, _____5_____ information we find online is not always reliable. _____6_____ students, in particular, need _____7_____ advice on how to check their sources. Used wisely, _____8_____ technology can be one of the greatest tools for learning.

TASK 4 Find and fix the article error

Each sentence has one article mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. The nature is beautiful in spring. _____
2. She wants to become engineer. _____
3. Pollution is serious problem in big cities. _____
4. The most tourists visit in summer. _____
5. I need an advice from my teacher. _____
6. The London is a very expensive city. _____

Answer key

TASK 1 · CHOOSE A, AN, THE OR – (NO ARTICLE)

1 an 2 The 3 – 4 an 5 – 6 the 7 – 8 a

TASK 2 · CORRECT THE UNCOUNTABLE NOUN

1. advice (a piece of advice)
2. much / a lot of information
3. research (a piece of research)
4. two pieces of equipment
5. good news
6. some knowledge

TASK 3 · COMPLETE THE PARAGRAPH

1. – (technology, general)
2. a (smartphone)
3. the (the internet, unique)
4. the (the world, unique)
5. the (specified: the information we find online)
6. – (students, general plural)
7. – (advice, uncountable)
8. – (technology, general)

TASK 4 · FIND AND FIX THE ARTICLE ERROR

1. Nature is beautiful in spring. (general → no article)
2. She wants to become **an** engineer.
3. Pollution is **a** serious problem in big cities.
4. **Most** tourists visit in summer. (no “the”)
5. I need **advice** from my teacher. (uncountable)
6. **London** is a very expensive city. (no “the”)



Well done. Keep this guide open the next time you write a Task 2 essay – apply one rule at a time until it becomes automatic. More grammar and vocabulary packs at prepex.ai.