

Extension exercises

Chapter 2: Articles | Comments

Exploring English and Exploring how learners use English

The aim of these exercises is not to make specific points about how we use articles but to encourage you to notice more how we use them and to become more sensitive to the problems your learners have.

Answers to the precise questions will depend on the material you choose.

Course materials

Answers to this exercise will also depend on the material you choose.

- 1 You may find that the use of articles is dealt with piecemeal and far from comprehensively. At low levels, attention is often focused mainly on choosing between *a* and *an*. Subsequently, attention is often paid to articles only in the context of fixed expressions (*watch [] TV, play [] football, play the piano*, etc.).
- 2 Coursebooks generally present a selection of ‘rules of thumb’. These are chosen according to the level of the intended users and the problems they are expected to have. We sometimes need to be careful that these rules of thumb don’t mislead learners (for example, ‘use *the* if there is only one of something’). Some rules of thumb may specifically target European learners – for example non-European learners may wonder why *a/an* before occupations receives explicit attention.
- 3 Not many coursebooks pay attention to this.
- 4 Gap-filling exercises are very popular. These help learners to memorise rules and allow the teacher to see how well they have been understood. Sometimes lack of context makes these exercises artificial and difficult to do.