



Working In English
by Doing Business In English™

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS ENGLISH
GRAMMAR AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE
BY DOING BUSINESS IN ENGLISH

Date August 2025 No 1
Doing Business In English
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Doing Business In English has put together this booklet to help professionals develop their business English grammar and sentence structure. This booklet includes explanations of several forms of grammar plus links to external sites that help with general and specific grammar and sentence structure.

Business English is a specific section of the English language which can be quite different to academic English, the grammar does not change but there are sections which are particularly important. This English depends on clear and precise use, additionally with attention to attention to tone and cultural awareness.

Learners who can develop their use of effective grammar and sentence structure can increase their confidence and express themselves more clearly and accurately.

Effective use of business English has become essential for professionals globally who aim to perform in international business. Increasing capability increases opportunities for professionals because their businesses are more likely to put them forward for more engagement with clients, stakeholders and colleagues in other offices worldwide. Strong business English skills often create opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach for professionals.

Professionals who use effective grammar show authority and precision; they can build trust and confidence. To many learners grammar and sentence structure are a painful topic that they just would rather do without as learning can be hard and time consuming. However, most leaders working cross-culturally will share how important it is to be effective, seen as professional, avoids painful misunderstandings and gives professionals a competitive edge.

It is simply not possible to learn grammar and sentence structure in a hurry but like going to a gym regularly a lot can be achieved through regular disciplined work. Many learners commit to 15-30 minutes every day on specific learning and achieve great results over time. There is no standard way of learning vocabulary, it varies for most learners.

This booklet covers tenses, modal verbs, conditionals, conjunctions, linkers, sentence structures, the passive voice, negation, articles and punctuation. In addition, there are links to additional resources throughout the booklet and at the end extras that can be useful for learners.

Tenses

Grammar tenses refer to time of the action of a verb. There are three major tenses in English, past, present, and future. These tenses can explain an action or event that occurred in the past, an event that occurs in the present, or an event that will occur in the future. Most business English communication requires use of the 5 most common tenses, but as professionals advance to management roles then the ability to explain accurately and clearly what has happened in the past, is happening or will happen is critical. For example knowledge of the more advanced tenses allows the use of 2 different tenses in the same sentence, effectively showing which action happened first, how long each action happened for and whether the second impacted on the first. Therefore, learning how to use the full range of tenses can be difficult but is a powerful tool in business.

The Tenses

- Present Simple - I do, I do do
- Present Continuous - I am doing
- Present Perfect - I have done
- Present Perfect Continuous - I have been doing
- Past Simple - I did, I did do
- Past Continuous - I was doing
- Past Perfect - I had done
- Past Perfect Continuous - I had been doing
- Future Simple - I will do
- Future Continuous - I will be doing
- Future Perfect - I will have done
- Future Perfect Continuous - I will have been doing

Tenses	Positive	Negative	Question
Present Simple	I am an engineer	I am not an engineer	Am I an engineer?
Present Continuous	I am programming	I am not programming	Am I programming?
Present Perfect	Bob has learnt Java	Bob has not learnt Java	Has Bob learnt Java?
Present Perfect Continuous	They have been discussing the issue	They have not been discussing the issue	Have they been discussing the issue?
Past Simple	Jane negotiated	Jane did not negotiate	Did Jane negotiate?
Past Continuous	The boss was talking	The boss was not talking	Was the boss talking?
Past Perfect	The customer had called after the meeting	The customer had not called after the meeting	Had the customer called after the meeting?
Past Perfect Continuous	They had been creating a solution	They had not been creating a problem	Had they been creating a problem?
Future Simple	Ann will make a presentation	Ann will not make a presentation	Will Ann make a presentation?
Future Continuous	John will be writing a report	John will not be writing a report	Will John be writing a report?
Future Perfect	Jill will have met the customer by the end of the week	Jill will not have met the customer by the end of the week	Will Jill have met the customer by the end of the week?
Future Perfect Continuous	We will have been studying this text for 6 hours by the end of the day	We will not have been studying this text for 6 hours by the end of the day	Will we have been studying this text for 6 hours by the end of the day?

Tenses Are Primarily Classified Into Three Categories;

- **Past Tense:** The verbs that are used to indicate an action, event, or condition that has happened in the past are known as past tense.
- **Present Tense:** The verbs that are used to indicate an ongoing event or an event that is currently occurring in the present moment are known as present tense.
- **Future Tense:** The verbs that are used to indicate an event that is going to occur in the future are known as future tense.

There are two ways of forming a tense in English which is from the main verb i.e the past and the present form and to form other tenses, we need the help of auxiliary verbs such as have, be, or will.

Each of These Three Tenses have Four Different Aspects: Simple, Perfect, Continuous and Perfect Continuous. Tense and Aspect are defined as grammatical categories that are mostly used together. The Tense defines the location of an action or an event in time whereas, Aspect defines how an action is viewed in terms of time rather than actual location in time.

The Functions of Tenses

Simple Tenses

The simplest form of each type of tense which is used to indicate single actions in the past, present, or future is known as Simple tenses.

Examples :

Simple Past Tense: He sent the order yesterday.

Simple Present Tense: He sends orders every workday.

Simple Future Tense: He will send the order tomorrow.

Progressive or Continuous Tenses

This tense describes or expresses a continued or ongoing action which is, was or will be in progress in the present time, past time, or in the future. This tense talks about unfinished or ongoing events or actions.

Examples :

Past Progressive or Continuous Tense: I was attending a conference, so I didn't join the kickoff meeting.

Present Progressive or Continuous Tense: I am attending the conference this week.

Future Progressive or Continuous Tense: I will be attending the conference in April.

Perfect Tenses

A Perfect Tense is a form of verb tense which is used to indicate one event that has occurred before another. Adverbs such as never, yet and, already are used to indicate the perfect nature of the used tenses.

Examples:

Past Perfect Tense: She had completed the negotiation before the deadline.

Present Perfect Tense: She has completed the negotiations.

Future Perfect Tense: She will have completed the negotiation.

Perfect Progressive or Continuous Tenses

The perfect progressive tenses usually denote the “from when” or “how long” of an event or occurrence. Also, they always have the adverbs since or for in the sentences to indicate the continuous or progressive nature of the tenses.

- Present perfect progressive is used to indicate an activity or event that started in the past and is continuing at present.
- Past perfect progressive is used to indicate an activity or event that started in the past and has continued to occur for some time in the past.
- Future perfect progressive describes the actions that will continue up until a point in the future.

Examples:

- Past Perfect Progressive Tense: She has been negotiating for three hours.
- Present Perfect Progressive Tense: She has been teaching in this school for ten years.
- Future Perfect Progressive Tense: She will be working as Sales Director from March.

Use of Different Tenses and Aspects:

Simple Past Tense

The Simple Past Tense is always used for completed actions and events. The best example would be when writing steps in the research process or any historical background information. This could be your own research or a research done by someone else the tense we use to write would be in Simple Past Tense.

Examples:

- We contacted the new customer, but they were not as interested as we thought.
- Gill launched the new range at the trade show.
- Our competitor attended a new exhibition.

Simple Present Tense

The Simple Present Tense is used commonly while academic writing. The two main uses of Simple Present Tense is while describing facts and describing the content of a particular text. These facts or content description does not have to be located in a specific time and hence they are called Simple Present.

Example:

The conference is in London.

The Chairman hears the company is going to win an award, making him very happy.

Simple Future Tense

The Simple Future Tense is used commonly while making predictions or stating intentions. It is also sometimes used for stating the hypotheses. The main rule to this though is to avoid making any statements about the future that shows any certainty.

Example:

The project team expect the pain point to be overcome by Friday.

The stakeholder expectations could make the team worry.

Present, Past and Future Continuous

The Continuous Aspect is similar among the tenses, it is useful for synchronizing the events in relation to one another.

Example:

While the engineers are programming the Project Manager completes a report for the customer.

The customer was still asking questions 2 hours later.

Present, Past and Future Perfect

The Perfect Aspect is similar among the tenses: it refers to an action or a state that occurred in the past at an indefinite time. It could also be something that must have begun in the past but is continued in the present time.

Example:

She has worked at the company for 7 years.

She had worked with the customer before.

They will have completed the tasks before the end of the month.

Present Perfect Continuous

The Present Perfect Continuous is used to describe an event that starts in the past and is continued to the present or has any relevance to the present. Example: The Sales Director has been speaking about the product for 2 hours and now he is tired.

Past Perfect Continuous

The Past Perfect Continuous is used to describe an event that started, continued and ended in the past and has relevance to the past.

Example: He had been negotiating all week and now he is close to agreement.

Future Perfect Continuous

The Future Perfect Continuous is used to describe an event that will continue in the future and has relevance to the future at an expected time.

Example: He will have been driving for 3 hours.

Exercises

[Online Tense Exercises - English Grammar \(english-grammar.at\)](http://english-grammar.at)

[Master ALL TENSES in 30 Minutes: Verb Tenses Chart with Useful Rules & Examples - YouTube](#)

[ALL English Tenses in 20 Minutes - Basic English Grammar \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[PAST PRESENT FUTURE | 12 English Tenses | Learn English Grammar Course \(youtube.com\)](#)

Sentence Structure

There are three kinds of sentences, knowing which type to use helps learners become more concise and clearer in both writing and speaking. The three types are as follows.

Simple sentences consist of a single independent clause:

- The CEO presented. (A noun and a verb)
- Customers raised their orders. (This adds a direct object)
- During the conference, the sales team presented and took questions during the conference. (This includes a prepositional phrase and a compound verb)

Compound sentences consist of two or more independent clauses attached by a comma and a linking word (e.g., and, but, or, etc.):

- Bob created the presentation, and Jane delivered it. (This could be 2 sentences but this structure makes it a compound sentence)

Complex sentences consist of at least one dependent clause followed by at least one independent clause:

- While we were launching the go to market strategy, our competitor launched a great new product. (The use of 'while' means the 2 clauses must be part of the same sentence)

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence combines two or more simple sentences, the independent clauses are joined by a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon. Examples that show how two simple sentences become a compound sentence follow.

“The project was delivered late. We were in a lot of trouble.” Becomes “The project was delivered late; we were in a lot of trouble.”

“I am a product manager. Anna is a project manager.” becomes “I am a product manager, and Anna is a project manager.”

“The project scope was too extensive. The milestones badly planned. Consequently, it was a disaster.” becomes “The project scope was too expensive, the milestones planned, and consequently it was a disaster.”

[Simple and compound sentences | Syntax | Khan Academy](#)

[Simple, Compound, Complex Sentences | Learning English](#)

[What Are Compound Sentences? – Explanation and Examples](#)

Complex sentences

1. Business development can be *more* exciting *than* account management.

Comparison

2. The Dutch market is booming, *whereas* the Belgian market is tough.

Contrast

3. The supplier's figures for 2024 were better *because* of 2 new products.

Reason

4. We will start working with Zerco *in order to* improve the range of choice.

Purpose

5. *Although* we had a plan in place for the downturn, it still caused major issues.

Concession

6. *If* we launch the new product range in 2025, we should see an increase in sales.

Conditionals

7. *Whenever* that saleswoman promotes a new product, customers seem to buy.

Time phrases

8. *Launching* products in Spring normally gets the best results.

'ing' nouns

9. *What we really need to do is* accept we are missing project milestones and negotiate with the stakeholders.

Emphasis

10. The team has a major technical problem, *which* could delay the whole project.

Relative pronouns

Resources & Examples

[The 4 English Sentence Types – simple, compound, complex, compound-complex - YouTube](#)

[Simple, Compound and Complex Sentences - YouTube](#)

[How to write a complex sentence - BBC Bitesize](#)

[How to Write Complex Sentences: Structure and Rules | YourDictionary](#)

[Complex Tests - Learning English \(englisch-hilfen.de\)](#)

Active Voice and Passive Voice

In English the active voice is used when the subject performs the action, while the passive voice specifies what is happening or what happened to the subject. In speech professionals usually use the active voice as it implies confidence, direct and openness, whereas in writing many professions, particularly the legal and financial professions use the passive voice, this is seen as demonstrating a formal and more professional approach. Therefore, there are situational, cultural and business sector factors to consider when selecting which voice to use.

Positives and Negatives of Using Passive Voice

Positives:

- Maintains a level of objectivity in emails, reports and formal documents.
- Creates both a neutral and professional tone in business writing.
- Can be used to avoid direct blame, which is often in many contexts.

Negatives:

- Can create an impersonal tone and feel, which might not be appropriate.
- Sometimes it creates longer and less concise sentences.
- Can make communication both unclear and unspecific by not including the subject.

Active voice

A sentence is in the active voice when the subject of a sentence does the verb's action. The examples are written - subject, verb, and then object.

Active voice examples - Engineers write code, accountants create financial accounts and project managers deliver projects.

Passive voice

A sentence is in the passive voice when the subject is acted on by the verb, made with a conjugated form of 'to be' plus the verb's past participle. This commonly requires a preposition as well (e.g. by). The object becomes the subject.

Passive voice examples - Code is written by engineers, financial accounts are created by accountants and projects are delivered by Project Managers.

Tense	Active	Passive
Present simple	I write an email.	An email is written (by me).
Present continuous	I am writing an email.	An email is being written (by me).
Past simple	I wrote an email.	An email was written (by me).
Past continuous	I was writing an email.	An email was being written (by me).
Present perfect	I have written an email.	An email has been written (by me).
Pres. perf. continuous	I have been writing an email.	An email has been being written (by me).
Past perfect	I had written an email.	An email had been written (by me).
Future simple	I will write an email.	An email will be written (by me).
Future perfect	I will have written an email.	An email will have been written (by me).

Exercises

[Active and passive voice | LearnEnglish \(britishcouncil.org\)](#)

[Passive Voice - Online Exercises - English Grammar \(english-grammar.at\)](#)

[English Sentence Structure - English Grammar Lesson - YouTube](#)

Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are small but important words that can communicate a wide range of meanings, including politeness, possibility, necessity and obligation. Effectively using modal verbs can improve business communications and relationships, showing options, suggestions, politeness and requirements.

High Certainty

Have to

I have to sign the order to get the shipment.

Must

I must meet the owner to secure the deal.

Will

I will present the range to the customer next week.

Would

I would request an appointment with the buyer whenever I had a new product.

Should

I should request an appointment with the buyer whenever I have a new product.

Can

I can visit on Friday at 10am if convenient.

Could

I could start the negotiation next week on the new project.

May

I may accept the price my customer has proposed.

Might

I might be able to go to the conference.

Low Certainty

Should and shouldn't

Should and shouldn't are used to ask for and give advice and suggestions:

“That's deal is no good – you should go back and re-negotiate.”

“First of all, you shouldn't offer that product to that customer.”

“I should learn SQL to improve my technical skills.”

“I should not go to the conference as I have a work back log.”

2 Should and shouldn't, used to express that a subject did not do what they were expected to in the past or act responsibly.

“We should have presented the product range earlier to some of the key accounts.”

“In hindsight, I believe I shouldn't have increased the quantity on the order.”

3 Should and shouldn't, used to express that a subject is not doing what they are expected to currently or is not behaving sensibly.

“We should be upgrading the product.”

“We should be working on new designs now but we are still arguing.”

4 Should can be replaced with ought to when giving advice, ought to is more formal and polite.

“You should contact the stakeholders immediately.”

“You ought to contact the stakeholders immediately.”

Could and couldn't

1 Could and couldn't are the past forms of can and can't:

"In the past, I could understand the customer's expectations, now I can not."

"Yesterday, I couldn't find the costings for the project – but today I have them."

"Last week, they couldn't explain their proposal but now they can and do it very well."

2 Could, used to talk about future possibilities:

"I could meet the customer on Friday when I am near their offices."

"I could put together some ideas if the customer is interested."

"I could start the course in September if I get my application in on time."

3 Use of could to make polite requests

"Could you explain the sales strategy please?"

"Could you send over your order proposal this week please so I can secure the stock?"

"Could we present the project on Thursday please?"

Can	Could
General ability in the present <i>I can manage my workload</i>	General ability in the past <i>I could manage my workload</i>
Informally asking for permission <i>Please can I use your machine?</i>	Formally / politely asking for permission <i>Please could I use your machine?</i>
Informally requesting something <i>Can you join the meeting Bob?</i>	Formally / politely requesting something <i>Bob, please could you join the meeting?</i>
Possibility in general <i>You could try using a new code</i>	Possibility in the past <i>You could have tried using a new code</i>
Offer to help <i>Can I help you with the customer?</i>	Suggestion after being asked what to do <i>I could help with the customer if you like</i>
Not allowed / cannot <i>We cannot meet the deadline</i>	Would be able to / can <i>With some help, we could meet the deadline</i>

Would and wouldn't

1 **Would/wouldn't** are used to talk about hypothetical, unreal or unlikely situations."

"If I were the Head of Sales of my company, I would make a lot of changes to the strategy."

"If customers were more demanding, there wouldn't be so much substandard production."

"She would negotiate more if she believed in the proposal."

"The project is going well, I would congratulate the team but I do not want them to slow down."

Note: In this case, **would** is often shortened to 'd

"If I were the supplier of that product, I'd make some changes."

"I'd make a deal if the customer could prove they can pay on the agreed date."

2 **'Would you like'** is used to make polite offers

"Would you like me to start the presentation?"

"Would you like to make a bid for the contract?"

"I would like to offer a great price to you as you are a highly valued customer"

"We would like to offer a new deal on the new project range."

3 **Would** can be used to ask 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' or 'how' (not always, but often)

"How would we agree a deal?"

"What would you do with the product back log?"

"When will we have the resources to complete the task?"

"Who would want to work with that supplier?"

Exercises

[Modal Verbs - Online Exercises - English Grammar \(english-grammar.at\)](http://english-grammar.at)

May and Might

1 Use may/might to talk about possibility, might normally implies a smaller probability of something happening (5-25% chance) than may (25-50%).

“They might sign the contract, but it feels very unlikely.”

“They may sign the contract, I still think there is a chance.”

2 Use may (not might) to ask for and give permission.

“May I use the meeting room please?”

“Yes Bob, you may use the meeting room.”

“Visitors may not smoke in the lobby.”

3 Use may (not might) to express wishes.

“May you new season bring you great results.”

“May 2026 bring you happiness and success.”

4 Use may have to speculate about actions in the past.

“Your suggestion might have been ignored by the customer.”

“Your idea may have opened the door with that customer.”

[May vs Might: What's the Difference? - The English Today](#)

[May vs Might | English Modal Verbs | Learn English Grammar | Woodward English](#)

[MAY or MIGHT?](#)

Conditionals

Using conditionals effectively in business is essential when communicating, they help express ideas, situations and possibilities. Effective use improves clarity and persuasiveness, thereby improving decision-making, negotiations, strategic planning and developing trust.

Conditionals are used extensively in contracts, negotiations, formulating a project plan, and/or reviewing. Without effective use of conditionals, it is impossible to communicate with clarity, creating ambiguity and potentially conflict. These statements must firstly be made correctly in terms of grammar but also applied appropriately to demonstrate the required meaning.

Care must be taken with non-native speakers when using conditionals because they are taught at very different levels, for example many professionals with advanced levels of English simply have no about the use of mixed conditionals and others who did not learn modal verbs such as 'would' in depth also have issues understanding.

Many professionals become too dependent on the word 'if', it must be used effectively but too much use can make communication repetitive and less credible. There are alternatives, such as the following and more on page 20 that are called conditional linkers.

As long as – on condition that

'They will attend the conference as long as their visas are approved.'

In case – in the event

'Please increase your inventory levels in case there is an uplift in demand.'

Provided that – subject to / on the condition

'Provided the user signs up this month, they will get the discount.'

Unless - "if not"

'Unless I sign the order this week, the price will be increased.'

YouTube Lessons

[Learn English Grammar: The 4 Conditionals - YouTube](#)

[If- Clauses - Online Exercises - English Grammar \(english-grammar.at\)](#)

Type of Conditional	If Clause	Main Clause
0 – Eternal Truths	If you write code carefully PRESENT SIMPLE	bugs are reduced PRESENT SIMPLE
1 – Possible and likely (Greater than 50% chance) FUTURE	If I give the customer what they want PRESENT SIMPLE	They will write new orders FUTURE WITH WILL
2 – Possible and unlikely (Less than 50% chance) PRESENT	If I received a huge order PAST SIMPLE	I would buy the team cakes FUTURE WITH WOULD
3 – Impossible PAST	If I had joined the meeting PAST PERFECT	I would have argued my case FUTURE PERFECT (would + have + past participle)
MIXED CONDITIONAL Third / second	If I had met the customer IF + PAST PERFECT	I would be happy PRESENT CONDITIONAL (would + verb perfect form)
MIXED CONDITIONAL Third / second	If I were a great salesman IF + PAST SIMPLE	I would have sold the customer more goods PERFECT CONDITIONAL (would + have + past participle)

[YouTube Lessons](#)

[Learn English Grammar: The 4 Conditionals - YouTube](#)

[If- Clauses - Online Exercises - English Grammar \(english-grammar.at\)](#)

Conditional Linkers

Conditional linkers are particularly useful for managers when managing expectations, plans and discussions. They are also useful in emails, instructions and negotiations in writing when specific points have to be made.

Even if	Only if	Provided	Unless
Means	Means	Means	Means
Whether or not. Used to emphasize that something will still be true if another thing happens.	There is only one condition that will cause a specific result.	If or only if. Some condition has to be met in order for something else to be true.	Except on the condition that. Unless requires a main clause to make a complete sentence.
Example	Example	Example	Example
Even if we offer a discount I do not think we will get an order. We will secure an order even if our presentation does not go well.	Only if we use cash will we get a discount. We will get an order only if we do a presentation.	They can catch the deadline provided they have the resources. Provided we follow the instructions we will be ok.	We will be late unless we start the project today. Unless we are careful we will have a major problem.

Resources

[Linking Words of Condition - English Grammar - YouTube](#)

[Conditional Linkers - English Study Here](#)

Negation

When disagreeing with a particular word or sentence, negations can be added. Negations are words like no, not, and never. When working in English it is necessary to communicate what other should do positively, but there also times when negatives have to be communicated. In presentations when impact is needed words such as 'nothing, never and nobody' can be really powerful.

The opposite of 'I am a lawyer', is 'I am not a lawyer.'

Negative words:

- No, Not, None, No one, Nobody, Nothing, Neither, Nowhere & Never

Negative Adverbs:

- Hardly, Scarcely & Barely

Negative verbs

- Doesn't, Isn't, Wasn't, Shouldn't, Wouldn't, Couldn't, Won't, Can't & Don't

When using negatives, only use one at a time with any particular idea as otherwise, a double negative is created which is an error in English. When double negatives are used (in error) they invert the meaning so that the double negative actually becomes a positive. In addition to 'not' there are other ways of making negative statements in English. When "not" is included, we can use the affirmative forms of adverbs:

Nothing / not.... anything

- They want nothing at all from us.
- They do not want anything at all from us.

No one / not.... anyone

- No one was using the new programming language.
- There was not anyone waiting using the new programming language.

No more / not.... any more

- We have no more resources left. We have to stop the project now.
- We do not have any more resources. We have to stop the project now.

Nowhere / not.... anywhere

- Where are you sending the parcel? - Nowhere.
- Where are you sending the parcel? -- I'm not sending it anywhere.

Never / not.... ever

- I never want to work with that supplier again.
- I do not ever want to work with that supplier again.

Not a single / not.... a single

- There is not a single justification for this decision that I can accept.
- There isn't a single justification that I can accept.

Neither... nor...

'Neither' shows that two ideas are linked together and is used with a positive verb plus must not have other negative forms before it. Neither is commonly paired with the word 'nor' but can be used with 'or'. Neither can be used to refer to a singular or plural things. Therefore, 'neither...nor' means 'not this and not that'.

- Neither the Director nor the Manager support the idea.
- Neither of them is listening.
- Neither of them are members of the union.
- Which of these suppliers do you think is most suitable? - Neither of them are suitable as they can not deliver on time.

When neither is used as a determiner, it is placed before the noun.

- On neither side of the negotiation was there any sign of compromise.
- Neither manager would suggest a better process, it was a ridiculous situation.

Resources & Exercises

[Negation: Definition, Rules & Examples | Learn English \(learngrammar.net\)](#)

[Definition of Negation Plus Many Helpful Examples \(thoughtco.com\)](#)

[Learn Grammar: Negative Questions in English - YouTube](#)

English articles: the and a/an.

‘The’ is used to refer to specific or particular nouns, whereas ‘a’ or ‘an’ is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns. In English ‘the’ is called the definite article and ‘a & an’ the indefinite articles.

Mandarin, Russian, Vietnamese and other languages do not have specific words for articles, often using suffixes instead. This means that learners from these languages often have real difficulties using articles effectively. They can be learnt but it takes some time as they often appear illogical and there are no simple overall rules, instead there are different rules specific to individual situations.

- the - definite article
- a & an - indefinite article

If a colleague says, "Please plan the product launch," they mean a specific product. If the colleague says, "Please plan a product launch" they mean any product rather than a specific product. In addition ‘the’ is used to refer to a specific or particular member of a group. When a colleague says, "I attended a launch of the market leading company", there are many companies, but there is only 1 market leading company, so we use ‘the’.

‘A & an’ in contrast are used to refer to a non-specific or non-particular member of the group. For example, "I could send over an engineer to help." Here, there is not a specific engineer.

Indefinite Articles: ‘a & an’

Knowing when to use ‘a’ or ‘an’ can be tricky as it depends on the sound that begins the next word, this type of rule is not common in the English language. It works as follows;

‘a’ + singular noun starting with a consonant: a phone; a book; a laptop; a project

‘an’ + singular noun starting with a vowel: an email; an apple logo; an iphone; an overtime planner

‘a’ + singular noun beginning with a consonant sound: a user (it sounds like 'yoozer,' i.e. begins with a consonant 'y' sound, so 'a' is used); a university degree.

‘an’ + nouns starting with silent “h”: an hour.

‘a’ + nouns starting with a pronounced "h": a hard drive.

Definite Article: 'The'

In English the definite article is used before singular and plural nouns when the noun is specific or particular. 'The' signals that the noun is definite and it refers to a particular member of a group e.g.; "The customer loved the range and will start working with us." – here there is a specific customer, the customer that loved the range.

Geographical use of the

There are some specific rules for using the with geographical nouns.

Do not use the before:

- 1 Names of most countries and territories: France, Argentina and Japan; but do use with e.g. the Netherlands, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, the United States
- 2 Names of cities, towns, or states: Paris, Colchester and California.
- 3 Names of streets: Miami Blvd, Palm St.
- 4 Names of lakes and bays e.g. Lake Nakuru, Lake Attabad except with a group of lakes like the Great Lakes.
- 5 Names of mountains e.g. Mount Kinabulu and Mount Chimborazo except with ranges of mountains like the Pyrennes or the Himalayas or unusual names like the Matterhorn.
- 6 Names of continents e.g. Africa, Asia and Europe.
- 7 Names of islands (Easter Island, Maui, Key West) except with island chains like the Channel, the Pacific and the Coral Sea Islands.

Do use the before:

- 1 Names of rivers, oceans and seas e.g. the Nile, the Pacific and the Red Sea.
- 2 Forests, deserts, gulfs, and peninsulas e.g. the Sahara Desert, the Persian Gulf, the New Forest, the Arabian Peninsula
- 3 Points on the globe e.g. the Equator and the North Pole.
- 4 Geographical areas e.g. the Middle East, the West and the Far east.

When A, An or The are not Used

Some common types of nouns that don't use A, An or The are:

- 1 Names of languages and nationalities e.g. Arabic, Chinese, English, Egyptian or Spanish, (unless you are referring to the population of the nation e.g. "The Germans are known for their high quality engineering.")
- 2 Names of sports e.g. volleyball, hockey, baseball.
- 3 Names of academic subjects e.g. history, mathematics, physics, history and IT.

Examples & Exercises

[A vs. An, Indefinite Articles | ENGLISH PAGE](#)

[Definite and Indefinite Article - Online Exercises - English Grammar \(english-grammar.at\)](#)

Punctuation

Suppose you are presenting a speech. If you speak too quickly, your audience will not be able to understand what you are saying. It is important to stop and take a breath a few times as you read from your notes. But how do you know where to pause, where to change your voice, and where to stop? The answer is easy. You can use the punctuation marks you encounter as a guide for your pacing.

Punctuation marks provide visual clues to readers, telling them how they should read the sentence. Some punctuation marks tell you that you are reading a list of items while other marks tell you that a sentence contains two independent ideas. Punctuation marks tell you not only when a sentence ends but also what kind of sentence you have read. This chapter covers different types of punctuation and the meanings they convey.

Comma	,	He is a smart, dynamic and effective salesperson
Colon	:	She bought 3 products: a phone, a charger and a watch
Semi colon	;	Bob is a project manager; Jane is a product manager
Full stop	.	The goal has been achieved.
Question mark	?	Will this meeting ever end?
Slash	/	Invites will be sent to programmers/analysts only
At sign	@	My email is bob@gmailcom
Hyphen	-	Up-to-date
Exclamation mark	!	What a goal!
Ellipsis mark	...	Tomorrow...we upload the solution.
Apostrophe	'	That is Mary's car
Underline	_	We must find a <u>solution</u>
Quotation mark	"	She said "I will buy the product for 25 euros."
Asterick	*	*The law was passed on 15/6/2008

Resources

[Punctuation | Writing | EnglishClub](#)

[List of Punctuation Marks with Rules and Examples - Punctuation Marks](#)

[Punctuation: The Ultimate Guide | Grammarly](#)

[Punctuation Explained \(by Punctuation!\) | Scratch Garden \(youtube.com\)](#)

[PUNCTUATION 📄 | English Grammar | How to use punctuation correctly \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Learn Punctuation: period, exclamation mark, question mark \(youtube.com\)](#)

Web Resources

[The 2025 Grammar Guide by EnglishGrammar.org](#)

[BBC Learning English - Easy grammar guide](#)

[English Grammar Guide - English Professor](#)

[English Grammar: A Complete Guideline](#)

[English Grammar Today on Cambridge Dictionary](#)

YouTube Resources

[How to use present tenses - 6 Minute Grammar](#)

[English Grammar Course For Beginners: Basic English Grammar](#)

[Have got in English - English grammar lessons](#)

[ALL the Grammar you need for ADVANCED \(C1 Level\) English in 13 minutes](#)

[Live English Class: Linking words for conversation](#)

[10 MOST COMMON Grammar Mistakes English Learners Make 🎧 🎧 🎧](#)

[English Sentence Structure - English Grammar Lesson](#)

[Present Simple and Present Continuous: The Grammar Gameshow Episode 1](#)

[“Get over it”, “hook up”, “blow away”: 10 Everyday English Expressions](#)