

I. Study carefully the following phrases. It is a good idea to learn some of them by heart.

USEFUL PHRASES FOR COVER LETTERS:

Salutation

close

| | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Dear Sir, Dear Sirs, US usage = Gentlemen: | (all followed by) | Yours faithfully, |
| Dear Sir or Madam, | | |
| Dear Mr Brown Dear Professor Smith | (all followed by) | Yours sincerely |

Introduction

I am writing in reply to your advertisement published in
 With reference to your advertisement infor the position of
 I am writing to apply for
 I wish to apply for
 I am applying for the post of

The body of the letter

I feel that my qualifications match your requirements
 I feel I would be suitable for this post because
 My qualifications are as follows:
 I wish to gain experience of
 Having already worked as a for, I wish to extend my experience
 , I feel I could be useful to you

I enclose my CV
 Please find enclosed the names and addresses of my referees

I could come for an interview at any time which would suit you.
 at your convenience

I am available for an interview
 I would be glad to attend an interview

I look forward to hearing from you.

USEFUL VOCABULARY FOR COVER LETTERS:

Verbs:

act as - carry out - create - develop - devise - establish - exceed - expand - graduate
 - head - implement - introduce - negotiate - raise - redesign - reduce - set up -
 study - supervise

Adjectives:

adaptable - adept - committed - conscientious - dependable - enterprising - loyal -
 outgoing - reliable - resourceful - sensitive - tactful

Nouns:

oral and written communication skills - extensive experience in - excellent knowledge of -
 the ability to work in multicultural teams - leadership skills

SPECIAL CASES IN THE USE OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

To decide if you should use the word *the*, ask yourself these three questions:

1. Is the noun indefinite (unspecified) or definite (specific)?

The general rule states that the first mention of a noun is indefinite and all subsequent references to this noun are definite and take *the*:

A man is walking down a road. There is a dog with *the* man.

The second mention may be a synonym:

Combine butter, sugar and eggs. Add flour to *the* mixture.

First (indefinite) mention requires *a* or *an* for a singular count noun, no article for a plural or non-count noun. Second mention makes *the* correct for both count and non-count nouns:

A growing plant must have water and minerals. *The* plant must also have sunlight. *The* minerals must include nitrates and *the* water must not be saline.

Three special groups of nouns are considered definite in reference even if they have not been mentioned in the preceding sentence or clause.

a) The first group consists of nouns which refer to shared knowledge of the situation or context.

For example, in Canada you can say

The Prime Minister will arrive tomorrow

because there is only one Prime Minister in Canada, and so it is clear to whom you are referring.

Similarly, if there is only one hospital in the town, you can say

He's been working in *the* hospital for two years.

But you couldn't say this in Toronto, where there are many hospitals. You would have to name the particular hospital in your first reference to it:

He's been working at Toronto General Hospital for two years. He says *the* hospital is in a financial mess.

b) The second group consists of nouns referring to unique objects:

e.g., the sun/the earth/the Pope/the sky/the equator

c) Superlative adjectives and unique adjectives form the third group. Because there can be only one of these (only one of a series can be the tallest or the best or the first), they take the definite article:

Mexico City is *the* most populous city in the world.

I enjoyed *the* first part, but I was disappointed at *the* end.

She is *the* principal researcher.

2. Is the noun modified?

a) Premodification: If the noun is preceded by one of the following--

this/that/these/those/some/any/each/every/no/none/my/mine

do not use the definite article.

e.g., the red books/some red books/no red book/his red books/each red book

b) Postmodification: if the noun is followed by a relative clause (*who/which/that*) or a prepositional phrase (*of/in/to...*), it is made definite and takes the definite article.

The man who lives next door is Chinese.

We take *the* regular collection of garbage for granted.

The journey to Vancouver takes three days by train.

No one expected *the* results that were found.

EXCEPTION: collective nouns take the indefinite article:

a box of matches/a deck of cards/a bar of soap/a herd of cows.

3. Is the noun generic?

Generic reference is used when one refers to a whole group or class, to generalize about all possible members of a group. There are five patterns one can use:

a) no article PLUS plural count noun:

It's astonishing what *gymnasts* can do.

b) no article PLUS noncount noun:

Love can cause a lot of suffering.

c) indefinite article PLUS singular count noun:

It's astonishing what *a gymnast* can do.

[This pattern cannot be used to discuss the location or existence of something/someone. You cannot say *A lion lives in Africa*. You must use pattern (a) or (d)].

d) definite article PLUS singular count noun:

It's astonishing what *the gymnast* can do.

e) definite article PLUS plural nationality noun:

The Chinese have an ancient culture.

Pattern (a) is most common in colloquial English; pattern (d) is frequently use in academic writing.

Special Uses of Articles

a) **Proper nouns.** Proper nouns, because they are the names of people or places, are already specific and so do not need to be made more specific by the definite article. So we say "John," not "the John," and "Canada," not "the Canada." (There are one or two anomalous usages in place names: e.g., "the Netherlands," but "Holland.") This rule explains why we say "Boyle's Law," not "the Boyle's Law," and "Planck's constant" but not "the Planck's constant." Sometimes, however, a proper noun is used as an adjective, and adjectives do not affect the decision to use the article with the noun. You must look at the noun in order to know whether or not to use the definite article.

X *Japan's financial problem* — *Japan* is a proper noun. No article.

X *the Japanese financial problem* — *Japanese* is an adjective. Look at the noun to decide if there should be an article: *problem* is general and must be made specific by using "the."

X *Japanese financial problems* — *Japanese* is an adjective. Look at the noun. It is plural, so refers to all problems in general. No article.

X *Smith's book on Japan* — *Smith* is the proper name of the person. No article.

X *the Smith book on Japan* — *Smith* is used as an adjective modifying the noun *book*. *Book* is general, and must be made specific by using the article. (If the name is possessive, it is a proper noun. If not, it is acting as an adjective.)

b) **Media and communications:**

Use a noun PLUS definite article to refer to systems of communication and the mass media, in contrast to the actual machine of communications. *The telephone* is the system of communication; *a telephone* is the actual physical machine.

The newspapers are all in agreement on the latest financial disaster.

[exception: *television* usually has no article: *Did you see him on TV?*]

c) Means of transportation:

Use the definite article to refer to the whole transport system, rather than to an individual vehicle:

How long does it take on *the* bus?

The subway is quicker.

[if you use the construction "by PLUS means of transport," there is no article: *I go to subway*].

d) Forms of entertainment:

To refer to a form of entertainment in general, use the definite article:

I enjoy seeing *the* ballet.

To refer to a particular event, use the indefinite article:

I saw *a* good movie last night.

e) Place/object or activity nouns:

Certain nouns refer to either a place/object or to an activity. When they refer to an activity, do not use the definite article:

ACTIVITY

OBJECT

I go to *bed* at 11 o'clock.

Don't jump on *the bed*.

She went to *school* for many years.

The school was too small.

Many families eat *dinner* together.

The dinner was delicious.

I shower before *breakfast*.

The breakfast was delicious.

They are at *church*.

The church is very old.

She is in *class*.

The class is in Room 102

f) Directions:

Nouns indicating direction do not take the definite article:

Go two blocks *south* and turn *left*.

[exception: nouns indicating political divisions take the definite article:

She is on *the* left of the party.]

g) Periods of time:

Names of decades, centuries and historic periods take the definite article, as they are a form of unique reference:

The 1960s were a time of student rebellion.

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Over 50 other files giving advice on university writing are available at www.writing.utoronto.ca*

The articles: specific x generic reference

Observe:

| A specific | | |
|------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| sg | There is a microscope in each room. The microscope is used in our experiments. | two different pieces of information |
| pl | There are microscopes in each room. The microscopes are used in our experiments. | |
| B generic | | |
| sg | A microscope is a useful instrument. The microscope is a useful instrument. | the same piece of information |
| pl | Microscopes are useful instruments. | |

The sentences in A refer to a **specific** microscope or to specific microscopes. The difference between the singular and the plural, and between the indefinite and the definite article, is important.

The sentences in B refer to a whole **group of similar objects**. In the category of countable nouns, one item represents the whole class. There is no difference in meaning between the singular and plural. In the singular, both *a* and *the* can be used.