In context
2 min

What is a definite article?

'the' is a definite article.
Definite Article 'the'

13 min

'The' is a definite article: it is used before a particular or definite object. It can be singular or plural.

Examples:
This is the cat, which caught the rat.
These are the cats, which caught the rats.
The woman who talked to me is the Minister’s wife.

We also use ‘the’ before an object or a person of which there is only one. This includes the names of seas, rivers, chains of islands, mountain ranges (but not mountains), and countries when their name includes a noun (such as state, kingdom...).

Examples:
The earth rotates around the sun.
The river Thames flows into the North Sea.
He travels from the United States to the United Kingdom every year.

'The' is used before superlatives.

Examples:
The most expensive object is not necessarily the best.
She was the first woman from here to become a doctor.
The nearest bakery is down the street.

'The' also refers to a class of people or objects.

Examples:
The nene is the official state bird of Hawaii.
Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
Certain restrictions caused unrest among the workers.
Language Tips about the Pronunciation of 'the'
5 min

We write "the" but can say "the" or "thee".

We say "the" when the next word begins with a consonant sound.
Examples:
- the car
- the boy

We say "thee" when the next word begins with a vowel sound.
Examples:
- the apple (we say "thee apple")
- the image (we say "thee image")

It is the sound that matters, not the letter we write. So we say "thee" before a vowel sound, not necessarily before a vowel. Likewise, we say "the" before a consonant sound, not necessarily before a consonant.
Examples:
- the house
- the hour (we say "thee hour")

When we wish to place emphasis on a particular word, 'the' is pronounced "thee", whether or not the next word begins with a consonant or vowel sound.
Example:
This is the (pronounced "thee") best brownie I have ever had!
Writing Exercise with the Teacher
5 min
Complete these sentences with 'a', 'an', or 'the', and read them to your teacher.
1. I need _______ pen to write my paper.
2. I hope you know _______ address to go to the hospital.
3. Can you give me _______ umbrella that is in the car please?
4. Mike has _______ bicycle.
5. This is _______ bicycle I want for my birthday.
6. Do you have _______ email address?
7. Can you see _______ email address on the brochure?
8. Would you like _______ apple?
9. _______ phone is ringing in the bedroom.
10. He is speaking to _______ man I don't know.

Reading Exercise with the Teacher
5 min
Read these words to your teacher.
1. the honest person
2. the unit
3. the urban legends
4. the hotel
5. the yacht

Watch the Video!
5 min
In this video lesson, you will review the difference between definite and indefinite articles.

Watch the video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHi2qRNsTxg&feature=related

Watch it again and choose the correct answer.
1. What category do articles belong to?
a. determiners
b. adverbs
c. demonstratives

2. What does the definite article refer to?
a. no particular or definite entity
b. a particular or definite entity
c. the verb

3. What is the letter 'y'?
a. a vowel
b. a consonant
c. a diphthong

Answers: 1a, 2b, 3b
Quiz
10 min

True or False?

1. 'the' is an indefinite article.
2. We use 'the' before an object or a person of which there is only one.
3. We only pronounce "thee" when the next word begins with a vowel.
4. When we wish to place emphasis on a particular word, 'the' is pronounced "thee".

Put the words in the list in the correct columns:

hour, house, honor, CIA, United States, urbanization, FBI, ferry

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<th>&quot;the&quot; is pronounced &quot;the&quot;</th>
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Complete the sentences with 'a', 'an' or 'the':

1. Would you mind taking _______ metro?
2. Would you mind calling _______ cab for me, please?
3. It was _______ honest mistake.
4. This nation is _______ newest UN member.