

UNIT 74

Plural and uncountable nouns with and without **the** (**flowers / the flowers, music / the music**)

a) We don't use **the** before a noun when we mean something *in general*:

- I love **flowers**. (*not* 'the flowers')
(**flowers** = flowers *in general*, not a particular group of flowers)
- I'm afraid of **dogs**.
- Doctors are paid more than **teachers**.
- **Crime** is a problem in most big cities. (*not* 'the crime')
- **Life** has changed a lot since I was a boy. (*not* 'the life')
- I prefer **classical music** to **pop music**. (*not* 'the classical/pop music')
- Do you like **English food** / **French cheese** / **Swiss chocolate**? (*not* 'the ...')
- My favourite subject at school was **history/physics/English**.
- I like **football/athletics/skiing/chess**.
- Do you collect **stamps**?

We say **most** people / **most** dogs etc. (*not* 'the most ...'):

- **Most** people like George. (*not* 'the most people' – see also Unit 82)

b) We say **the ...** when we mean *something in particular*:

- I like your garden. **The flowers** are beautiful. (*not* 'Flowers are ...')
(**the flowers** = the flowers in your garden, not flowers in general)
- **Children** learn a lot from playing. (= children in general)
- but:* We took **the children** to the zoo. (= a particular group of children, perhaps the speaker's own children)
- **Salt** is used to flavour food.
- but:* Can you pass **the salt**, please? (= the salt on the table)
- I often listen to **music**.
- but:* The film wasn't very good but I liked **the music**. (= the music in the film)
- All **cars** have wheels.
- but:* All **the students** in the class like their teacher.
- Are **English people** friendly? (= English people in general)
- but:* Are **the English people** you know friendly? (= only the English people you know, not English people in general)

c) The difference between 'something in general' and 'something in particular' is not always very clear. Study these sentences:

- I like working with **people**. (= people in general)
- I like working with **people who are lively**. (*not* all people, but **people who are lively** is still a general idea)
- but:* I like **the people I work with**. (= a particular group of people)
- Do you like **coffee**? (= coffee in general)
- Do you like **strong black coffee**? (*not* all coffee, but **strong black coffee** is still a general idea)
- but:* Did you like **the coffee we had with our meal last night**? (= particular coffee)

UNIT 74 Exercises

74.1 In this exercise you have to write whether you like or dislike something. Begin your sentences with: I like ... / I don't like ... / I love ... / I hate ... / I don't mind ... / I'm (not) interested in ... / I have no opinion about ...

Example: (very hot weather) I don't like very hot weather.

- 1 (football)
 - 2 (small children)
 - 3 (cats)
 - 4 (modern art)
 - 5 (horror films)
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74.2 What do you think about these things? Write a sentence about each one. Begin with: In my opinion ... / I think ... / I don't think ... / I don't agree with ... / I'm against ... / I'm in favour of ...

Example: (divorce) I think divorce is sometimes necessary.

- 1 (terrorism)
 - 2 (smoking)
 - 3 (examinations)
 - 4 (capital punishment)
 - 5 (nuclear power)
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74.3 In this exercise you have to choose the correct form, with or without the.

Examples: I'm afraid of dogs / ~~the dogs~~ Can you pass ~~salt~~ / the salt, please?

- 1 Apples / ~~The apples~~ are good for you.
- 2 Look at apples / ~~the apples~~ on that tree! They're very large.
- 3 Women / ~~The women~~ are often better teachers than men / ~~the men~~.
- 4 In Britain coffee / ~~the coffee~~ is more expensive than tea / ~~the tea~~.
- 5 We had a very nice meal in that restaurant. Cheese / ~~The cheese~~ was especially good.
- 6 Most people / ~~The most people~~ still believe that marriage / ~~the marriage~~ and family life / ~~the family life~~ are the basis of our society.
- 7 They got married but marriage / ~~the marriage~~ wasn't successful.
- 8 I know someone who wrote a book about life / ~~the life~~ of Gandhi.
- 9 Life / ~~The life~~ would be very difficult without electricity / ~~the electricity~~.
- 10 Skiing / ~~the skiing~~ is my favourite sport but I also like swimming / ~~the swimming~~.
- 11 Second World War / ~~The Second World War~~ ended in 1945.
- 12 Do you know people / ~~the people~~ who live next door?
- 13 Are you interested in art / ~~the art~~ or architecture / ~~the architecture~~?
- 14 All books / ~~All the books~~ on the top shelf belong to me.
- 15 Don't stay in that hotel. Beds / ~~The beds~~ are very uncomfortable.
- 16 Two of the biggest problems facing our society are crime / ~~the crime~~ and unemployment / ~~the unemployment~~.
- 17 I hate violence / ~~the violence~~.