

A and the: the basics 1 ★

With a singular COUNTABLE¹ noun, we nearly always use *a* or *the* (for plural countable nouns, see GB 155, next week)

1 'New' (we haven't mentioned 'cat' before)



“Look, there’s a cat over there!”

2 'Old' (now we know which cat we are talking about)



The cat has moved in.

Cartoons: Holden-Hotopf

3 Examples of both:

Yesterday I saw a young woman outside the house with a baby. The baby was

↑ 'new' ↑ 'old': it's my house ↑ 'new' ↑ 'old' now

asleep in a buggy, and the young woman was chatting to a friend..

↑ 'new' ↑ 'old' now ↑ 'new'

¹COUNTABLE: *a song, three songs* (you can count songs)

UNCOUNTABLE: *music, three-musics* (you can't count music)

GB 155-156: more on **a, the** and \emptyset (nothing)

See also GBs 38, 39 and 86.

Quick check

Put **a** or **the** into each blank:

1 _____ man came into _____ bank where I work; he was carrying _____ gun. Suddenly two police officers entered, and _____ man dropped _____ gun and ran away.

2 In _____ office where I work, _____ new employee started yesterday. _____ new man's name is Juan, and he was given _____ desk next to mine. He's _____ nice guy.

