

USE OF DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE ARTICLES

1. Use a definite article (el, los, la, las) to single out a specific person, place, etc. For illustration purposes the articles will be underlined.
 - Las plumas están en la mesa. (The pens are on the table.)
 - La profesora Ugalde está en su oficina. (Professor Ugalde is in her office.)
 - El bolígrafo está en la mesa. (The pen is on the table.)
 - El señor Arriagada está aquí. (Mr. Arriagada is here.)
 - Los exámenes no son difíciles. (The exams are not difficult.)
2. Nouns used in a general sense are preceded by the definite article.
 - El hombre es un animal inteligente. (Man is an intelligent animal.)
 - Me gustan los carros modernos. (I like modern cars.)
3. Use before each noun in a series.
 - Pongan los libros, los papeles y las plumas en el suelo. (Put the books, papers, and pens on the floor.)
 - Visitó al hermano y al padre de su amigo. (Note: al = a + el) (He visited his friend's brother and father.)
4. The definite article is used with titles that indicate social position or profession. The article is omitted when directly addressing that person.
 - El profesor Sánchez es de Puerto Rico. (Professor Sanchez is from Puerto Rico.)
 - El presidente Clinton es de Arkansas. (President Clinton is from Arkansas.)
 - “¿Cómo está, profesor Sánchez?” (How are you, professor Sanchez?)
5. Use the masculine plural form before the last name of a family when referring to the whole family.
 - Los García ya no viven aquí. (The Garcia family (Garcias) no longer lives here.)
6. The definite article (not a possessive adjective; my, yours, his, hers, etc.) is generally used with parts of the body and articles of clothing in Spanish.
 - María tiene las manos limpias. (María's hands are clean.)
 - Tengo frío porque no traje el abrigo. (I am cold because I didn't bring my coat.)
7. The definite articles are used with days of the week, seasons of the year, and telling time.
 - No trabajo el sábado. (I don't work on Saturday.)
 - Los sábados miro caricaturas. (On Saturdays I watch cartoons.)
 - La primavera es mi estación favorita. (Spring is my favorite season.)
 - Es la una de la tarde. (It is one o'clock in the afternoon.)

Note: Do not use the definite article with months.
8. Spanish uses the definite article with the words **más** (more) and **menos** (less) to form the superlative. (When comparing more than two items.)
 - Carlos es el (estudiante) más inteligente del grupo. (Note: del = de + el) (Carlos is the most intelligent of the group.)

- Su casa es la más vieja. (His house is the oldest.)
- El estudiante flaco es el menos preparado. (The thin student is the least prepared.)

9. Use before geographic names (oceans, rivers, lakes, mountains, deserts, etc.)

- En la frontera entre los dos países queda el lago Titicaca. (Lake Titicaca is located on the border between the two countries.)

Note: The definite article is generally not used with names of countries or cities.

Note: There are only two contractions in Spanish.

a + el = al

de + el = del

but do not contract the following:

a la

de la

a los

de los

a las

de las

Use of Indefinite Articles (un, unos, una, unas)

1. Used to refer to entities not specified.

- Hay una niña en la cocina. (There is a girl in the kitchen.)
- Debes comprar una computadora. (You should buy a computer.)

2. Plural forms are used to express “some, few, several.”

- En la mesa hay unos libros nuevos. (On the table are a few new books.)

3. Use after “sin, con” and with negative expressions to emphasize the number.

- No tiene ni un solo amigo. (He doesn’t have a single friend.)
- No ha dicho ni una palabra. (She hasn’t said a single word.)
- Mi esposa no me deja con un centavo. (My wife doesn’t leave me with one cent.)

Use of the Neutral Article (Lo)

1. Use “lo” before adjectives, possessive adjectives, and perfect participle forms to change the adjectives and perfect participle forms to nouns.

- Lo bueno de esto es que nos permite practicar. (Bueno is an adjective) (The good thing about this is that it permits us to practice.)
- Todo lo mío es tuyo. (Everything that is mine is yours.) (Mío is a possessive adjective)
- Lo escrito presenta una historia de una época. (Escrito is the participle form) (What has been written presents a history of an epoch.)