

Unit 72

The (1)

For the difference between **the** and **a/an** see **Unit 71**.

a We say **the** ... when there is only one of something:

- What is **the** longest river in **the** world? (There is only one longest river in the world.)
- We went to **the** most expensive restaurant in town.
- **The** only television programme he watches is the news.
- Paris is **the** capital of France.
- Everybody left at **the** end of the meeting.
- **The** earth goes round **the** sun. (Also: 'the moon / the world / the universe'.)

b We say: **the** sea **the** sky **the** ground **the** countryside / **the** country

- Would you rather live in a town or in **the** country?
- Don't sit on **the** ground! It's wet.
- We looked up at all the stars in **the** sky.

We say **go to sea** / **be at sea** (without **the**) when the meaning is **go/be on a voyage**:

- Ken is a seaman. He spends most of his life **at sea**.
- but:* I would love to live near **the** sea. (*not* 'near sea')

We say **space** (*not* 'the space') when we mean space in the universe:

- There are millions of stars **in space**. (*not* 'in the space')
- but:* He tried to park his car but **the** space wasn't big enough.

c Cinema theatre radio television

We say **the** cinema / **the** theatre:

- We went to **the** cinema last night.
- Do you often go to **the** theatre?

Note that when we say '**the** cinema / **the** theatre', we do not necessarily mean one particular cinema or theatre.

We usually say **the** radio:

- We often listen to **the** radio.
- I heard the news on **the** radio.

But we usually say **television** (without **the**):

- We often watch **television**.
- I watched the news on **television**.
- but:* Can you turn off **the** television, please? (= the television set)

d *Meals:* We do not normally use **the** with the names of meals:

- What time is **lunch**?
- We had **dinner** in a restaurant.
- What did you have for **breakfast**?
- Ann invited me to (*or* for) **dinner**.

But we say **a** meal:

- We had **a** meal in restaurant.

We also say **a** when there is an adjective before **lunch/breakfast** etc.

- Thank you. That was **a** very **nice** lunch. (*not* 'that was very nice lunch')

For more information about **the** see **Units 71, 73-77**.