

JURASSIC ENGLISH™

IELTS Speaking Starter Sheet

Fix a, an, the or nothing in 20 minutes: Lesson 1 of the Speaking Ladder as a short, complete mini-pack.

Lesson 1 | 20 minutes | IELTS Speaking | Practice only

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Your 20 minutes

Articles (a, an, the, or nothing) are the most frequent small error in speaking, because every noun is a slot. In this sheet you learn one rule in three parts, fix ten sentences, then speak and count your own slots. This is a shortened Lesson 1 of the IELTS Speaking Ladder.

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You need: a phone to record yourself, a timer, paper and a pen.

Warm up (2 minutes). Answer each question for 30 seconds. Do not worry about articles yet: just talk.

- What can you see in the room you are in now?
- What subjects are you studying, or did you study at school?
- What job would you like to do in the future?

> ***Practice material, not an official IELTS test.*** *It gives no band and promises none.*

The rule

> ***A / AN*** *= first time or one of many.* ***THE*** *= second time, the only one, or we both know which.* ***NOTHING*** *= plurals and uncountables in general.*

Three questions for every noun:

1. Is this the first time I mention it, or one of many? → **a / an**. Use **an** before a vowel *sound*: an app, an engineer, an hour, an instrument.
2. Have I mentioned it before, is it the only one, or do we both know which one? → **the**.
3. Am I talking in general, with a plural or an uncountable noun (music, food, maths, clothes)? → **nothing**. Do not put a / an before an uncountable noun, and do not stack two words (*a some*).

Not yet	Better
She was Vietnamese teacher.	She was a Vietnamese teacher.
I have never played instrument.	I have never played an instrument.
I like a food from my hometown.	I like food from my hometown.
I won a some medal at school.	I won some medals at school.
My birthday is on the June.	My birthday is in June.
My grandmother gives me a lucky money.	My grandmother gives me lucky money.

Why it matters: articles appear in almost every sentence, so fixing them improves your accuracy everywhere at once. And you already get many "nothing" slots right.

Article doctor

*Write **a**, **an**, **the**, or a dash (—) for nothing. Then say the sentence out loud and say WHY: first time, second time, only one, or in general.*

1. She was _____ Vietnamese teacher.
2. I had _____ maths teacher. _____ teacher taught me for three years. *(write both, with a slash)*
3. I think _____ patience is _____ important quality for a teacher. *(both)*
4. I study _____ maths, but sometimes I study _____ physics. *(both)*
5. I often buy _____ clothes through _____ app. *(both)*
6. I don't have to go to _____ shop.
7. I like _____ Vietnamese music because I can understand _____ words. *(both)*
8. I have never played _____ instrument.
9. In _____ evening I usually take _____ rest. *(both)*
10. I buy _____ new food or _____ clothes online. *(both)*

Score: _____ / 10. (Check the key on page 6 only after you have tried every sentence.)

Talk for 60 seconds

Set your timer and record yourself. Speak for one minute on one of these: **My room** · **My street** · **A job I would like to do**.

Afterwards, write five nouns you used with their articles: a window · the window · chairs ...

1 _____ · **2** _____ · **3** _____

4 _____ · **5** _____

Check your own speaking

Listen back and tick:

- ☐ Did every singular countable noun have a / an / the (or my, this, etc.)?
- ☐ Did I switch from a / an to **the** when I mentioned something again?
- ☐ Did I avoid a / an with uncountable nouns like food, music, money?
- ☐ Did I say any phrase twice in a row?

My count: article slots right ÷ all article slots = _____ ÷ _____

Key and upgrade the answer

Article doctor key *(accept any answer with the same meaning)*

1. a Vietnamese teacher (one of many, first mention)

2. a maths teacher / The teacher (first mention, then second)

3. — patience / an important quality (uncountable in general; one of many, vowel sound)

4. — maths / — physics (school subjects in general)

5. — clothes / the app (plural in general; one app we both know)

6. the shop (only one is meant)

7. — Vietnamese music / the words (general; then specific)

8. an instrument (one of many, vowel sound)

9. the evening / a rest

10. — new food / — clothes (uncountable and plural, in general)

Weaker and stronger answer: a job you would like to do

Weaker: *In future, I would like to be software engineer. Software engineer is person who writes programs for the computers and the phones. Every day, engineer sits at desk, talks with team and fixes problems in code.*

Stronger: *In the future, I would like to be a software engineer. A software engineer is a person who writes programs for computers and phones. Every day, the engineer sits at a desk, talks with the team and fixes problems in the code.*

- First mentions take **a / an**: a software engineer, a desk.
- Second mentions and things we both know take **the**: the engineer, the team, the code.
- General plurals and uncountables take **nothing**: computers, phones, problems.

What to work on next

Next 10 minutes: record 60 seconds on a new topic (My street, or A job I would like to do). Before you speak, ask the three questions: first time? we both know? in general? Then count your slots again.

Run it twice: on a new Part 2 cue card, speak for two minutes (Run A), listen back and count your article slots right and wrong. Then speak again (Run B) and try to beat Run A.

You can now: choose a / an, the or nothing and say why · switch from a to **the** on the second mention · leave out the article for general plurals and uncountables · count your own article slots on a recording.

The full IELTS Speaking Ladder

Eighteen lessons for Parts 1, 2 and 3, one small habit per lesson, with timed practice and model answers. This sheet is a shortened Lesson 1. Find the full pack at **jurassicenglish.com/products**.

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