

Articles and Verbs and Prepositions, Oh My!

Practice Exercises for Three Common ESL Grammar Problems

1. a) Count and Non-Count Nouns

Add final s/es to the nouns in *italics* if necessary. Do not change other words. The first sentence is done for you.

Example: Athena always has fresh egg**s** available because she raises chicken**s** in her yard.

1. I had *chicken* and *rice* for dinner last night.
2. Outside my window, I can see a lot of *tree*, *bush*, *grass*, *dirt*, and *flower*.
3. Alton gave me some good *advice*. Nadia also gave me some good *suggestion*.
4. Yoko learned several new *word* today. She increased her *vocabulary* today.
5. I drank two *glass* of *wine* last night.

For an explanation of count and non count nouns, including more exercises, see pages 107-111 in Azar's *Understanding and Using English Grammar* (3rd edition).

b) Articles

Complete the sentences with **a/an, the**, or no article **0**.

1. We need to get _____ new phone.
2. Alex, would you please answer _____ phone.
3. _____ people use _____ plants in _____ many different ways. Plants supply us with oxygen. They are a source of _____ lifesaving medicines. We use plant products to build _____ houses and to make _____ paper and _____ textiles.
4. When you look at _____ sandy shore, it might seem practically empty of _____ animals. This appearance is deceptive, however. Beneath _____ surface, the sand is full of _____ life. It is teeming with _____ crabs, _____ shrimp, _____ worms, _____ snails, and _____ other kinds of _____ animals.

5. Our children enjoyed going to the beach yesterday. When they dug in _____ sand, they found various kinds of _____ animals. Susie found _____ crab, and so did Johnny. _____ crab Johnny found pinched him, which made him cry. But he had _____ good time at _____ beach anyway.

For an explanation of basic article usage, please consult pages 112-118 in Azar.

2. Present Perfect vs. Simple Past

Fill in the blanks.

Libraries today are different from those in the 1800s. For example, the contents of libraries (change) _____ greatly through the years. In the 1800s, libraries (be) _____ simply collections of books. However, today most libraries (become) _____ multimedia centres that contain tapes, computers, disks, films, magazines, music, and paintings. The role of the library in society (change, also) _____. In the 1800s, libraries (be) _____ open only to certain people, such as scholars or the wealthy. Today libraries serve everyone.

For an overview of verb tenses, check out Chapters 1-4 of Azar. Also see: Simple Past, page 26, and Present Perfect, pages 36 to 41.

3. Practice with Prepositional Phrases

Identify the prepositional phrase:

1. Beetles destroyed the corn in the field.
2. The police officer cleared traffic from the intersection.
3. I parked my tiny car in my huge garage.
4. Trees fell during the Ice Storm of 1997.
5. Students depend on buses and bicycles for transportation.
6. We walked to White Mountain and ate ice cream yesterday.

Information on Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases can be found in the Supplementary Grammar Units section (A3) of Azar. Also note the Preposition Combinations chart on page A21.

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