

The with geographic names: the UK, the USA, no article

CEFR A2-B1 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

Most single country names take no article. The takes over with plural names, group names and rivers, seas, oceans and mountain ranges.

The rule

No article with most countries and cities

- Most single country names take no article: France, Japan, Brazil.
- Cities and towns take no article: London, Tokyo, Cairo.
- States and provinces usually take no article: California, Bavaria.
- This is the zero article: the name stands alone without a, an or the.

The with group and plural names

- Countries with plural names take the: the Netherlands, the Philippines.
- Country names built from groups take the: the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates.
- The is part of those official names, so keep it: the USA, the UK.
- Groups of islands take the: the Canary Islands, the Bahamas.

The with water, mountains and deserts

- Rivers take the: the Nile, the Amazon, the Thames.
- Seas, oceans and canals take the: the Mediterranean, the Pacific, the Suez Canal.
- Mountain ranges take the: the Alps, the Andes, the Himalayas.
- Lakes and single mountains take no article: Lake Victoria, Mount Fuji.

The with regions and directions

- Points of the compass take the: the north, the south, the east.
- Named regions often take the: the Middle East, the Arctic, the Caribbean.
- Continents take no article: Europe, Asia, Africa.
- Streets, squares and parks take no article: Oxford Street, Central Park.

Buildings and special names

- Buildings take the when the name describes the thing: the Eiffel Tower, the White House.
- Many landmarks take no article: Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey.
- Learn the official name of a place, because no rule covers every case.

- When the name contains of or an adjective such as United, the is almost certain.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. She lives in ____.

2. I have never been to ____.

3. ____ is the longest river in Africa.

4. We sailed across ____.

5. ____ are popular with skiers.

6. He comes from ____.

7. ____ is a volcano in Japan.

8. They live in ____.

9. ____ is a large lake in Africa.

10. She was born in ____.

11. We visited ____.

12. ___ covers much of North Africa.

13. Birds from northern Europe fly to ___ in winter.

14. Our hotel is on ___.

15. The Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean to ___.

16. They walked around ___.

17. She works in ___.

18. ___ form the longest mountain range in South America.

19. He crossed ___ by boat.

20. ___ is a continent, not a country.

Answer key

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1. **the Netherlands** — The Netherlands has a plural name, so the article belongs to the name.
2. **Japan** — A single country name takes no article.
3. **The Nile** — Rivers take the before their name.
4. **the Pacific** — Oceans take the before their name.
5. **The Alps** — Mountain ranges take the before their name.
6. **the United States** — A group name such as the United States keeps the article.
7. **Mount Fuji** — A single mountain takes no article.
8. **the Philippines** — The Philippines has a plural name, so the article is part of it.
9. **Lake Victoria** — A single lake takes no article.
10. **France** — A single country name takes the zero article.
11. **the United Kingdom** — The official group name keeps the article.
12. **The Sahara** — A named desert takes the before its name.
13. **the south** — A point of the compass takes the.
14. **Oxford Street** — Streets take no article.
15. **the Red Sea** — Seas take the before their name.
16. **Central Park** — Parks take no article.
17. **the United Arab Emirates** — A country name built from a group keeps the article.
18. **The Andes** — Mountain ranges take the before their name.
19. **the English Channel** — A channel takes the before its name.
20. **Europe** — Continents take no article.