

## A student's questions about articles, with my answers

**Note:** the student's questions are in black, and my answers are in blue writing.

1. "The graph below shows UK acid rain emissions, measured in millions of tonnes, from four different sectors between 1990 and 2007." This is a graph title taken from one of your posts. I'm confused as to why the article "the" is not put before "UK". Likewise, I saw another sentence in which "the" is missing: "The chart below shows average hours and minutes spent by UK males and females on different daily activities."

In the two examples you gave, "UK" is used like an adjective before another noun e.g. UK males. When "UK" is used in this way we miss "the". When "UK" is the main noun we write "the UK" e.g. I live in the UK. It's the same with "USA" and some other countries.

2. Should we say "young and old" or "the young and the old" in this sentence: "A game show can encourage friendly competition amongst both young and old."

You might hear it said in both ways. If someone says "amongst both young and old", they really mean "amongst both young and old people". The noun "people" is implied, but I suppose it would be better to include it when writing. It's fine to write/say "amongst both the young and the old" or "amongst both the young and old". "The young" is a noun, whereas "young" is an adjective in the phrase "young people".

3. "It is noticeable that levels of poverty were higher for single people than for couples." Should we put "the" before levels?

In this case "the" is optional. You can put it if you want, or you can miss it. Research has shown that English native speakers make different choices about whether to use "the" in this kind of situation, so don't worry about it.

4. "While acid rain gases from the domestic sector and other industries fell gradually, the transport sector saw a small increase in emissions." Should we put "the" before emissions as you are talking about specific emissions here?

It would be ok to add "the", but I prefer it without. I would add "the" if I wrote something like: "a small increase in the emissions that it produced".

5. "The proportion of spending on leisure and education was also highest in Turkey, at 4.35%, while expenditure on clothing and footwear was significantly higher in Italy, at 9%, than in any of the other countries." Is it ok to put "the" before "highest in Turkey" and "higher in Italy"?

We tend to write "the highest + noun" e.g. "the highest amount of spending". If we put the noun before, we don't need "the" e.g. "the amount of spending was highest". It's less common to use "the" before a comparative like "higher", and we definitely wouldn't use "the" before "higher in Italy" in the sentence above.