

UNIT ONE

DETERMINERS

Countables and Uncountables

Nouns are either countables or uncountables. However, there are some nouns which are used both as countables and uncountables.

EXAMPLES:

Gas is used for cooking. (Uncountable)

Some gases are used to destroy insects. (Countable)

Uncountable nouns are always singular and are not used with 'a/an'. A (an) is used to mean 'one'. It may also be used for any one example of a countable noun. The form 'a' is used with a noun beginning with a consonant or a vowel with a consonant sound. The form 'an' is used with a noun beginning with a vowel or with a vowel sound.

a man

a university

a union

a one-eyed man

a woman

a table

an apple

an hour

an M.A.

an M.Sc.

an egg

an orange

EXERCISE:

Put into the plural:

EXAMPLE:

A bird can fly.

Birds can fly.

1. An engineer works out a route.
2. A scraper is like a large box.
3. There is a lot of milk in this can.
4. A volcano is not a mountain of fire.

5. We can bore a hole with a drill.
6. A flame never shoots out of a volcano.
7. A fuel tank is built to store petrol.
8. A sample of earth was tested to see if concrete would be spoiled by it.
9. A writer writes a book and a reader reads it.
10. A designer designs a car.
11. A pen is filled with ink.
12. Does a mango grow on a tree?

EXERCISE:

Put into the singular:

EXAMPLE:

Policemen wear caps.

A policeman wears a cap.

1. Cars have gear boxes.
2. Tables are pieces of furniture.
3. Trowels are used by bricklayers.
4. Chairs are made of wood.
5. Draughtsmen make drawings and help consulting engineers to design new roads.
6. Roses are lovely flowers.
7. Elephants are huge animals.
8. Drivers drive cars or trucks.
9. They eat a lot of butter.
10. Huts are built with bamboo and grass.
11. Atmospheric gases are inorganic materials.
12. Air hostesses are very hospitable persons.

Use of a/an:

A/an is used:

(a) before a singular noun which is countable:

A table has four legs.

An apple has sweet taste.

(b) before a singular countable noun which is used as an example of a class of things:

A cow is a useful animal. (Meaning all cows are useful)

A car must be insured. (Meaning all cars must be insured)

(c) in expressions of quantity/price/speed etc.

a little 5 rupees a kilo

a dozen 100 miles an hour

a plenty of

(d) with certain numbers:

a hundred a thousand

Use of 'the' :

'The' is used:

(a) to refer back to an example of a countable noun used already.

EXAMPLE :

I bought a pen. *The* pen cost me Rs.100/-

(b) to indicate a thing that is only one of its kind:

The Sun, *the* Moon, *the* Sky, *the* Jupiter etc.

(c) for holy books/epics:

The Bible, *the* Quran, *The* Ramayana

- (e) before a noun which by reason of locality can represent only one thing:

My father is working in the garden. (The garden of his house)

- (f) before superlatives and 'first', 'second' etc.

the first week, the best student etc.

Omission of Articles

Articles are generally not used with the following:

- (i) Names of meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

He has breakfast at 8 every morning.

But

The breakfast served this morning was delicious.

- (ii) Plural countables:

He looked out and saw boats coming.

- (iii) Abstract nouns:

Death is natural to all human beings.

But

The death of Mrs. Indira Gandhi led to riots.

- (iv) Names of substances:

Gold is a precious metal.

But

The gold mined at Kolar is of superior quality.

- (v) Before names of games -- hockey, golf, cricket etc.

- (vi) Before names of subjects -- History, Chemistry, English

- (vii) The word 'nature' when it means the world of plants and animals. Similarly when 'man' represents the whole of mankind.

- (viii) With such words as school, college, university, church, hospital, prison etc. When these places are visited for the purpose for which they have been made, no article is needed.

Christians go to church on Sundays.

But

The mason went to the church to carry out repairs.

NOTE:

When used in a particular or specific sense, the rule of omission does not apply.

EXERCISE:

Put a, an or the where necessary:

1. Telex looks like ___ large typewriter.
2. Yesterday I met ___ man. ___ man was ___ engineer. ___ engineer told me a lot about ___ Russian bulldozer.
3. I bought ___ nice pen. ___ pen cost me Rs.45/-
4. ___ candle has ___ wavering flame and so has ___ oil lamp.
5. ___ specification is ___ secret document. ___ specification is passed on to stylists and engineers. ___ stylists study ___ document very carefully. ___ engineers try to find out possible alternatives for different parts. ___ specialized workshop makes ___ model. ___ model is then put to strict tests.

EXERCISE:

Put a, an or the where necessary:

1. ___ mason fell off ___ scaffolding. Immediately ___ mason was rushed to ___ hospital.
2. My engineer friend took me to ___ site of ___ dam where I saw ___ mechanical shovel at work.
3. For ___ Hindus ___ Ganga is ___ holy river.
4. ___ Sun has risen but ___ Moon can still be seen in ___ sky.

5. _____ book that we bought yesterday is very interesting.
6. _____ man who damaged _____ bridge has been caught by _____ police.
7. In _____ land of _____ Eskimos _____ sledge is _____ only means of transport.
8. My friend has become _____ politician.

EXERCISE:

Complete the following sentences using a/an/the where necessary:

1. He is taking _____ history course.
2. My sister is a student of _____ Engineering.
3. He is studying _____ English.
4. He is learning _____ English language.
5. I would like to have _____ Coffee.
6. They were standing in front of _____ school.
7. My youngest son is still at ~~the~~ school.
8. ~~The~~ Parliament is a sacred institution in a democratic set up.
9. ~~a~~ man is a social animal.
10. ~~A~~ rich and ~~the~~ poor should show respect for each others feelings.
11. He is playing in ~~a~~ tennis tournament.
12. _____ milk was all right, but _____ cream was sour.
13. I shall never forget _____ kindness you have shown me.
14. We are studying _____ history of India.
15. We believe in _____ liberty and _____ justice for all.
16. What is _____ life?
17. Mary is _____ beauty.
18. _____ President of India visited Hyderabad.
19. _____ Republic of India is making rapid strides towards prosperity.
20. What is _____ democracy?

21. What is the difference between _____ republic and _____ democracy?
22. The teacher asked me to read _____ first chapter for tomorrow.
23. Read _____ chapter number one again with proper pronunciation, accent and rhythm.
24. ~~The~~ Ramayana is a sacred book for _____ Hindus.
25. Psychology is _____ science.
26. _____ science has contributed much for human progress.

1.1 'Some' is used with countables as well as uncountables in affirmative sentences. When it is used with a countable noun, it is the plural of a (an) and means 'an unknown number' of that noun. When it is used with an uncountable noun, it means 'an unknown quantity' of that noun.

EXAMPLES:

Some (of these) chemicals are used for killing harmful insects.

Some (of the) oil is used for fuel.

1.2 'Any' is used with countables and uncountables in interrogative and negative sentences in the sense of a (an), one or some.

EXAMPLES :

Is there any policeman here?

There are not many boys in the classroom.

Are there any hills in this part of the country?

There is hardly any material left for the work.

EXERCISE:

Insert some or any where necessary.

1. There is not _____ clerk in the office.

2. Is there ____ petrol left in the fuel tank?
3. Do you hope to get ____ money from the firm? If yes, I would like to borrow ____ from you.
4. The engineer found ____ dumper trucks standing idle at the site.
5. Put ____ more mangoes in the basket.
6. ____ more scraping will have to be done to level the ground.
7. We haven't got time to do ____ more work.
8. Don't make ____ noise. Let him have ____ sleep. He did not have ____ last night.
9. "Is there ____ progress in the construction work?" "Yes, there is ____; but it's not satisfactory."
10. Are there ____ such planes that travel as fast as sound?

1.3 'All' is used with countables as well as uncountables.

EXAMPLES :

'All' engineers, all of the parts, all space, all the water

1.4 'Each' and 'every' are used with countables. 'Each' is used to indicate the unit separately, one by one.

EXAMPLES :

Each man has a car.

Each of the mechanics has tested the gear-box.

'Every' is used to indicate the unit separately as well as the units collectively.

EXAMPLES:

He has repaired every motor in the workshop.

Such things do not happen every day.

1.5 'No' and 'none' are used both with countables and uncountables.

EXAMPLES:

No book(s), no oil

None of the books, none of the oil

None is like every – it focusses on the unit separately as well as on the units collectively.

EXERCISE:

Insert all, each, every, no and none in the blanks where appropriate:

1. The engineers examine ____ the possible routes, before they select one.
2. Let ____ person go round the place and see for himself what it is like.
3. They examined ____ the samples carefully and found that ____ of them was upto the mark so they rejected.
4. The roof of the tunnel caved in. Rampal escaped; ____ other miner was killed.
5. ____ of the machines has been cleaned and oiled.
6. ____ sixth day the workmen are given a day's holiday.
7. There is ____ water in the lake. It has dried up.
8. ____ of them were set free, as ____ of them were found guilty.
9. I am terribly busy these days. I have ____ time to spare.
10. They do not like ____ other, but ____ of them has ever let others know about it.
11. Both of us work in this factory, although ____ of us is in a different section.
12. ____ one will be granted any leave, as the firm is short of hands already.

- 1.5 'Much' is used with uncountable nouns in interrogative and negative sentences. It is not used by itself in affirmative sentences. Instead plenty of, a lot of, a great deal of, are used.

EXAMPLES:

How much oil is produced in India?

Not much oil is produced in India.

A lot of oil is produced in Iraq.

This is too much for me; I can't eat all of it.

- 1.6 'Many' is, similarly, used with countable nouns in interrogative and negative sentences. It can be used by itself in affirmative sentences; however, the use of plenty of, a lot of in its place is preferred.

EXAMPLES:

How many people read this kind of stuff?

Not many read this kind of stuff.

Plenty of people read this magazine.

A good many workers have not liked the change.

- 1.7 'A little' is used with uncountables and means 'a small quantity'. 'A few' is used with countables and means 'a small number'. Little and few have the meaning 'almost none' or 'hardly any'.

EXAMPLES:

Can I have a little rest?

Only a few students can solve this problem.

There is little salt in the soup.

Few people live to the age of one hundred.

EXERCISE:

Insert much, many, a lot of, a great deal of, a little, little, a few and few in the blanks where appropriate:

1. Not ____ people have telephones in their houses.
2. Only ____ copies of the book are left with the bookseller; the rest have been sold out.
3. I am not interested in coal mining. I know ____ about it.
4. How ____ work can be finished today?
5. ____ pumping engines in these mines are out of order; only ____ are working.
6. There was ____ oil in the lamp; so it went out soon.
7. He knocked down the milk bottle and spilled ____ the milk on the floor. However, ____ milk was left in the bottle which was just enough for our tea.
8. The job is very dangerous, ____ workmen would be willing to take it up.
9. ____ smoke hangs over the crater, out of which ____ molten rock pours.
10. Usually a volcano gives ____ warning when it is going to erupt. So the people can always escape at least with their lives.
11. How ____ engineers are available for the supervision of the work in the factory?
12. Atoms are very small, ____ too small to be seen.
13. There are ____ forces which act without any solid connection.
14. There are ____ people who would give away to others everything they have.
15. It seems there is very ____ oxygen on Mars. There seems ____ chances that anyone lives there.
16. After ____ minutes the mist cleared ____ and we could have a hazy view of the huge bridge.

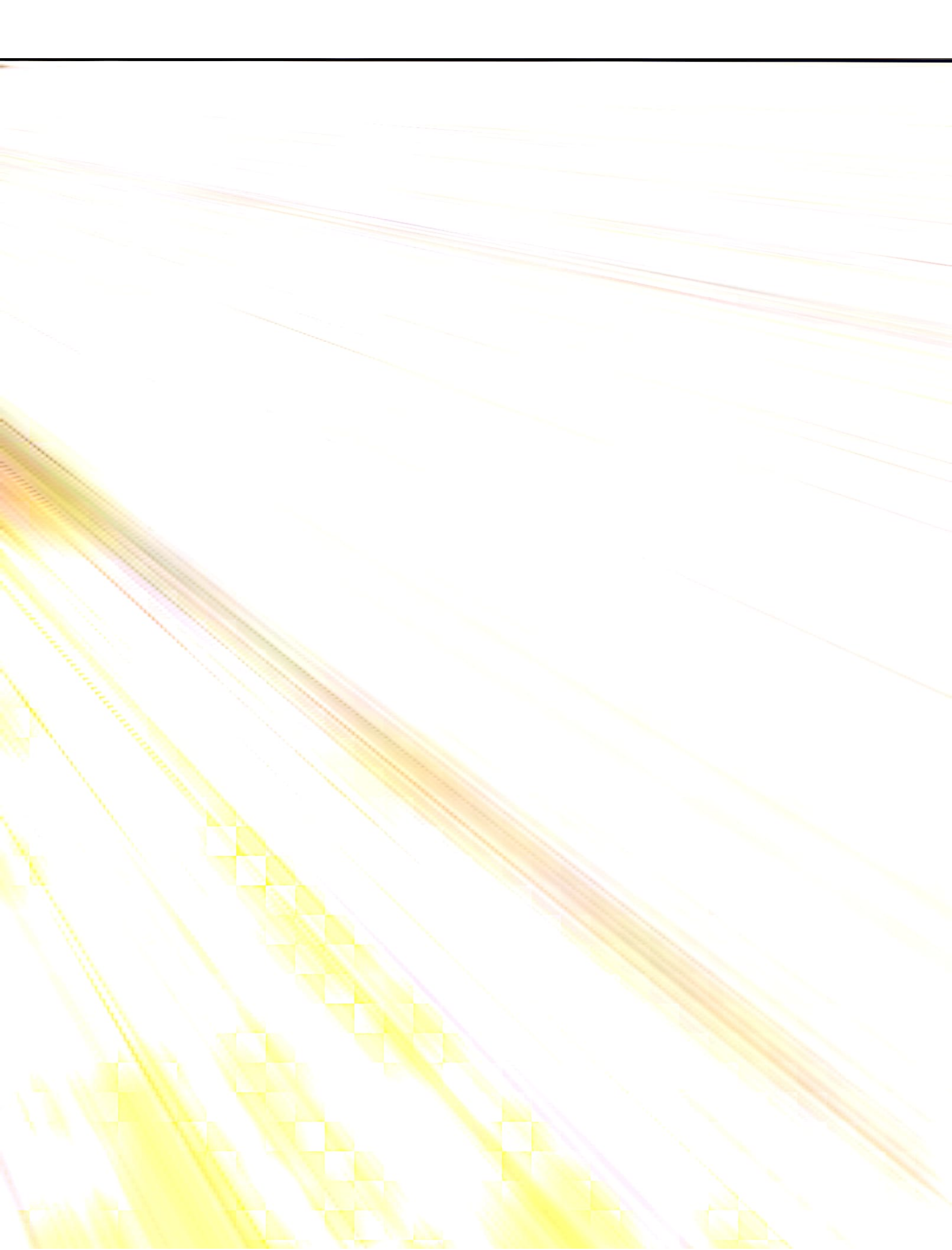
6. . . . grass always grows in . . . English field.
7. . . . chair is made of . . . wood.
8. . . . cat has . . . tail.
9. . . . man eats . . . meat.
10. . . . ring is made of . . . gold or . . . silver.
11. . . . coffee is . . . drink.
12. . . . coat is made of . . . wool.
13. . . . fish swims in . . . water.
14. We can write . . . letter on . . . paper.
15. . . . piano makes . . . music.
16. . . . iron is . . . metal.
17. . . . bread is made from . . . flour, and . . . flour is made from . . . wheat.
18. . . . orange grows on . . . tree.
19. . . . child must have . . . food.
20. . . . sugar is nice in . . . cup of tea.
21. We eat . . . soup with . . . spoon.
22. . . . knife is made of . . . metal.
23. . . . cow eats . . . grass in . . . summer.
24. I like . . . jam on . . . piece of . . . bread.
25. I can write . . . letter in . . . ink or with . . . pencil.

EXERCISE 4. Elementary

Note: Uncountable nouns, and countables in the plural are preceded by "some" when "a certain quantity, or number" is implied.

Examples: Bread is good for us. (All bread, in general.)
Give me some bread. (A certain quantity.)

Add "a", "an", or "some" where necessary:



3. It is pleasant to read . . . book in . . . afternoon.
4. There is . . . garden behind . . . house.
5. I have . . . pen and . . . pencil.
6. . . . tea is very hot, I must put . . . milk in it.
7. . . . postman has just put . . . letter under . . . door.
8. Give me . . . knife and . . . small spoon.
9. . . . cat loves . . . milk.
10. Mary wants . . . doll with . . . blue eyes.
11. You must give him . . . food and . . . cup of coffee.
12. . . . car made . . . loud noise.
13. . . . vegetables are good for . . . health.
14. . . . girls do not often wear . . . hats.
15. . . . door of . . . garage is broken.
16. There are . . . beautiful flowers in . . . park.
17. I want . . . glass of . . . milk.
18. . . . student at . . . back of . . . class is reading newspaper.
19. It is not good to smoke . . . cigarette before . . . meal.
20. . . . page of . . . book is torn.

EXERCISE 8. Intermediate

Note: See Exercise 7

Where there can be only *one certain* example that is meant, we normally use "the". (*The* sun, sky, ceiling, station, etc.) An important group of common nouns (mostly names of places) are used *without* an article in phrases closely associated with their special purpose or function, but *with* an article in a more general sense.

He went to bed (to sleep). He went to the bed (approached it).

He's at school (learning). I'll meet you at the school.

The ship's in (dry) dock. We walked round the dock(s)

Put it on paper (=write it). There's a mark on the paper.

And similarly with: prison, college, hospital, market, church, harbour (port), barracks, deck, (under) canvas, (at) sea, by train, and a few others.

Compare the following:

(a) There's a horse in the garden (=any single horse).

- (b) *Horses* are animals (=all).
 (c) Perhaps we'll see *some horses* there (=a certain number).
 (d) *The horses* are ready (=definite horses we know about).

Supply "a(n)", "some", or "the" where necessary:

1. There is . . . fly in . . . lemonade.
2. . . . youngest brother is at . . . school now. If you go to . . . school by . . . tram, you will be just in . . . time to meet him.
3. . . . birds can fly very high in . . . sky.
4. . . . book on that shelf is . . . interesting one about . . . history.
5. . . . ship you were speaking about has just come into . . . port. She has been at . . . sea for . . . long time. Look! . . . captain has just come on . . . deck!
6. It is pleasant to play . . . game of . . . tennis on . . . summer afternoon.
7. He makes . . . toys in . . . evening.
- 8 . . . butcher opposite . . . library always sells . . . good meat.
9. They have sent my boy-friend Cyril to . . . prison for hitting . . . policeman on . . . head. I'll go to . . . prison tomorrow to take him . . . books.
10. . . . donkeys are . . . stupid animals.
11. Put . . . butter on . . . potatoes.
12. I am fond of . . . apples with . . . cheese.
13. . . . honesty is . . . best of all . . . virtues.
14. He took up . . . swimming as . . . sport . . . last year.
15. He always smokes . . . cigarette with . . . cup of . . . coffee.
16. I should like . . . house in . . . country.
17. We had . . . dinner at . . . new restaurant . . . last night.
18. Let's get . . . strawberries for . . . tea.
19. Take . . . umbrella with you to . . . office, it may rain.
20. . . . car is ready now.
21. Jack and Jill went up . . . hill to fetch . . . pail of . . . water.
22. Do you prefer . . . book of . . . poetry or . . . stories of . . . adventure?