

The students $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{all} \\ \text{both} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ sat for the exam.

The students were $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{all} \\ \text{both} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ sitting for the exam.

[b] Since *half* may modify a following noun as an *ad hoc* or institutionalized compound, we can have pairs such as *half an hour* and *a half hour* (where there is little difference of meaning) or *half a bottle of wine* (half of the contents) and *a half bottle of wine* (a small bottle holding half the contents of an ordinary bottle).

[c] Fractions other than *half* are usually followed by an *of*-phrase and must normally be preceded by a numeral or the indefinite article. Compare:

She read *half* the book.

She read $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{a quarter} \\ \text{three quarters} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ of the book.

But, especially with *time*, *distance*, *height*, we sometimes find fractions used as predeterminers:

He was given six months for the work but he finished in *two-thirds* the time.

5.9 The MULTIFIERS have two uses as predeterminers. When the following determiner is the definite article, demonstrative or possessive, the multiplier applies to the noun so determined:

twice/double the length ('a length twice as great')

three times her salary ('a salary three times as large')

When the following determiner is the indefinite article or *each* or *every*, the multiplier applies to a measure (such as frequency) set against the unit specified by the following noun:

once a day

twice each game

four times every year

NOTE We can compare expressions of costing:

Oil then cost only *fifteen dollars* a barrel.

Her salary is *ten thousand yen* a/per month.

Postdeterminers

5.10 Postdeterminers take their place immediately after determiners just as predeterminers take their place immediately before determiners. Compare:

Predeterminer: *Both* the young women were successful.

Postdeterminer: The *two* young women were successful.

With zero determiner, of course, the distinction is neutralized:

Both young women were successful.
Two young women were successful.

Postdeterminers fall into two classes:

(a) ordinals, such as *first*, *fourth*, *last*, *other*;

(b) quantifiers, such as *seven*, *ninety*, *many*, *few*, *plenty of*, *a lot of*. *Few, little* Where they can cooccur, items from (a) usually precede items from (b); for example:

the *first two* poems

my *last few* possessions

her *other many* accomplishments

Among the (b) items, there are two important distinctions involving *few* and *little*. *First*, *few* occurs only with plural count nouns, *little* only with noncount nouns. *Second*, when preceded by *a*, each has a positive meaning; without *a*, each has a negative meaning. Thus:

I play *a few* games (ie 'several').

I play *few* games (ie 'hardly any').

She ate *a little* bread (ie 'some').

She ate *little* bread (ie 'hardly any').

We should note also a contrast involving assertive and nonassertive usage (2.11). Some items are predominantly *assertive* (such as *plenty of*, *a few*, *a little*, *a good many*), while others are predominantly *nonassertive* (such as *much*, *many*):

We need *plenty of* time.

~ We don't need *much* time.

She has written *a good many* poems.

~ She hasn't written *many* poems.

The articles in specific reference

The definite article

THE

5.11 The article *the* marks a noun phrase as *definite*: that is, as referring to something which can be identified uniquely in the contextual or general knowledge shared by speaker and hearer. Such shared knowledge is partly a knowledge of the world and partly a knowledge of English grammar, as we shall see in 5.12–14.

5.12 Where the use of *the* depends on shared knowledge of the world, we may speak of SITUATIONAL REFERENCE, and this is of two kinds. We first distinguish *the* used in connection with the IMMEDIATE situation: