

# Workshop – Improving English speaking and writing skills and avoiding common mistakes

“This is a practice-oriented workshop, which aims at helping writers to improve their texts for publication. The presenter will focus on major challenges experienced by Russians writing in English, for example, the usage of tenses, articles and prepositions, vocabulary in context, etc. He will invite participants to analyse written samples and find ways of improving them. At the end, there will be a Q&A session. Be ready with your questions!”

# Agenda

- Tense
- Which and That
- Numbers and dates
- Countable / uncountable – much / many
- Stress / Intonation
- Punctuation
- Spelling – UK / US
- Articles The; A; An....
- Plurals – Criteria etc.
- Prepositions
- Expressions “He said me.....”, “We went shopping with Olga”
- Lists – semi-colon
- Who / whom
- Another / An other
- At / On / In
- Word order

TENSE	TIME		
	past	present	future
Present Simple		I <b>want</b> a coffee.	I <b>leave</b> tomorrow.
	She <b>likes</b> coffee.		
Present Continuous		I <b>am having</b> dinner.	I <b>am taking</b> my exam next month.
	They <b>are living</b> in London.		
Present Perfect Simple	I <b>have seen</b> ET.	I <b>have finished</b> .	
Present Perfect Continuous	I <b>have been playing</b> tennis.		
	We <b>have been working</b> for four hours.		

TENSE	TIME		
	past	present	future
Past Simple	I finished one hour ago.	If she loved you now, she would marry you.	If you came tomorrow, you would see her.
Past Continuous	I was working at 2am this morning.		
Past Perfect Simple	I had not eaten for 24 hours.		
Past Perfect Continuous	We had been working for 3 hours.	If I had been working now, I would have missed you.	If I had been working tomorrow, I could not have agreed.

TENSE	TIME		
	past	present	future
Future Simple		Hold on. I'll do it now.	I'll see you tomorrow.
Future Continuous			I <b>will be working</b> at 9pm tonight.
Future Perfect Simple			I <b>will have finished</b> by 9pm tonight.
	We <b>will have been</b> married for ten years next month.		
Future Perfect Continuous			They may be tired when you arrive because they <b>will have been working</b> .
	In 30 minutes, we <b>will have been working</b> for four hours.		

# Numbers!

## Think of money!

- Rubles + Kopecks
- Dollars + Cents
- Pounds + Pence
- Euros + Cents

Trillion			Billion			Million			Thousand			Hundred	Ten	Unit
4	8	9	3	0	1	2	0	7	8	0	0	4	2	9

## Dates

1900	Nineteen hundred
1901	Nineteen oh one
1909	Nineteen oh nine
1910	Nineteen ten
1999	Nineteen ninety-nine

2000	Two thousand
2001	Two thousand and one
2008	Two thousand and eight
2009	Two thousand and nine
2010	Twenty ten
2099	Twenty ninety-nine

1973 is a date – 1,973 is a number

1973	Nineteen seventy-three
1,973	One thousand nine hundred and seventy-three

# Dates

British date format is DD MM YYYY

US date format is MM DD YYYY

We use ordinal numbers, not cardinal ones, for dates.

Using British format:

09/09/1978 – The ninth of September, Nineteen seventy-eight.

01/06/1958 – The first of June, Nineteen fifty-eight.

Using US format:

11/22/63 – The twenty-second of November, Nineteen sixty-three.

09/11/01 – The eleventh of September, Two thousand and one.



# Articles - 'a', 'an' and 'the'

It's all contextual!

We use *indefinite* to mean non-specific. *Indefinite* is general. We use *definite* to mean specific. *Definite* is particular. When we are talking about something in general, we use **a** or **an**. When we are talking about something in particular, we use **the**.

- I'm going to **a** concert. (We don't know which one yet)
- I'm going to **the** concert on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July at Crocus City. (there is only one on that day)
- I'm going on **an** excursion when I get to my holiday destination. (I will see what's available when I arrive.)
- I'm going on **the** excursion that drives through the tropical rainforest. (There is only one!)

# Articles - 'a', 'an' and 'the'

## Bed

Bed is a strange word! If we don't use an article, it means a place where we sleep, not a particular object:

- The children are in bed.
- We didn't get out of bed until after one o'clock.
- She got home and went straight to bed.

But when we are thinking about a bed as an object, we use articles in the normal way:

- She sat on the bed in my room [I choose 'the' because the listener knows which bed I mean].
- I need to buy a new bed [I choose 'a' because I don't know which bed yet, I'm not talking about a specific one].

# Articles - 'a', 'an' and 'the'

## Home

The word home is also a bit strange. We usually use 'no article':

- They went home.\*
- I stayed at home.
- Julie works from home.
- It's time to go home.
- Lucy is at home at the moment.

\*Notice we don't need to with 'go home' (not 'go to home').

But we can use an article with home when it means 'the building that somebody lives (or used to live) in'. In this case we use articles in the normal way.

- We visited the home of Jackie Kennedy.
- My sister has made her flat into a beautiful home.

[It's also possible to use 'home' as short for 'retirement home' or similar expression. We use articles in the normal way:

- Her grandmother is too frail to stay in her own house, so she lives in a (retirement) home.]

# Articles - 'a', 'an' and 'the'

## Work

Work (used as a noun) When we use 'work' to mean a place, then we don't need to use an article:

- She's at work.
- I arrive at work at nine.
- We leave work every day at six.
- You should go to work earlier.

When we use 'work' to mean a project that we are working on now, 'work' is a normal uncountable noun. So, we can use 'the' if we are talking about some specific work that the listener knows about:

- The work I'm doing at the moment is very interesting.

[An exception is when work means a piece of art/literature/music. In this case work is a normal countable noun].

## Another / An other

This is the same as the indefinite article “an”, except it’s slightly more specific and the form has been shortened.

There is **no** difference between “another” and “an other”.

Care needs to be taken NOT to use this as a definite article (common mistake!)

I have 2 cars. My favourite car is my Mercedes. My another car is a Porsche. (WRONG)

# Lists

Lists are generally introduced by a colon (:)

Items on a list should be separated by a comma (,) UNLESS the items on the list already include commas, in which case a semicolon (;) should be used to separate the items.

The last two items are separated with an “and” not a comma. (There is an argument that some people use the comma as well as “and”. This is referred to as “The Oxford comma” and is a matter of style.

- Mary's dinner consisted of the following: salad, soup, chicken and toast.
- I'm going to be inviting: John, the baker; Simon, the policeman and Toby, the architect.

## Which v That

Generally, "that" goes with restrictive clauses - those where the information provided in the clause is necessary to identify the subject:

- The beer that belongs to me. (as opposed to all other beers in the world).
- She held out the hand that was hurting.

"Which" goes with non-restrictive clauses - those which give information but which do not define the subject:

- The beer, which was a little warm, was still tasty.
- She held out the hand which he shook.

# Prepositions

**1** Grammar. *One of the traditional parts of speech, an indeclinable word governing (and usu. preceding) a noun, pronoun, etc., and expressing a relation between it and another word, e.g. Stratford on Avon, good for food, come after dinner, what did you do it for? Also, such a word when combined as prefix with a verb or other word.*

**famous for**

France is famous for its food.

**proud of**

He is very proud of his new car.

**interested in**

Julie is very interested in sport.

**pleased with**

John is very pleased with his new suit.

**bad at**

They are very bad at maths.

**good at**

Einstein was very good at physics.

**married to**

My mother has been married to my father for 20 years.

**excited about**

I'm very excited about my holiday.

**different from / to**

Coffee is different from tea.

**afraid of**

I'm afraid of spiders.



# Who v Whom

**Whom** should be used to refer to the object of a verb or preposition.

**Who** should be used to refer to the subject of a sentence.

When in doubt, try this simple trick: If you can replace the word with “he” or “she,” use **who**. If you can replace it with “him” or “her,” use **whom**.

- ***Who** made this decision?* [here, **who** is the subject of the sentence]
- ***Whom** do you think we should support?* [here, **whom** is the object of **support**]

# At-In-On Table

## TIME

year, century, month,  
morning, afternoon, evening

days of the week  
dates

time (hour and minutes)  
at noon, at night

**IN**

**ON**

**AT**

## PLACE

Continent, country, state,  
province, city, etc.  
inside buildings or opened areas

Street (without number)  
island, river, beach

complete addresses  
near buildings (use as reference)  
at school, at work, at church

## Punctuation - Fyodor Dostoevsky

An extract from the introduction to *The Idiot*.

Some of his experiences of his 1862 trip abroad were used in his book *Notes from the Underground* (1864). His wife and brother died in 1864 leaving him to support their dependants and in the face of heavy financial commitments he wrote *Crime and Punishment* which was published in 1866 and which became an immediate and prodigious success. In 1867 he married his young secretary Anna Grigoryevna Snitkina a union that was blessed with children and much happiness for she nursed him in his epilepsy loyally bore his mania for gambling helped him to overcome his frequent depressions brought on by dark and gloomy thoughts and assisted him in his work with her flair for business - a quality her husband lacked. Other great works followed such as *The Idiot* (1868) *The Devils* (1872) *A Raw Youth* (1875) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). Despite his success as an author Dostoevsky lived his entire life in a precarious financial state sometimes on the brink of starvation on occasion having to flee from his creditors and once having to pawn his overcoat and last shirt. He died in 1881 of a lung haemorrhage associated with an attack of epilepsy and was followed to his grave by 40000 mourning Russians. His reputation founded on his acute psychological and philosophical insight into the depths of the human soul has increased in stature during the twentieth century and he stands today secure as one of the giants of Russian literature.

## Fyodor Dostoevsky

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