



Zero Article in English: How to Explain School, Hospital, Music and Meals

S06E24 | For teachers to adapt to their learners

Teaching focus

We get further with contrasts than with lists of nouns that supposedly never take an article. In S06E24, we compare going to school with visiting the school, music in general with the music in a film, and having lunch with describing a particular lunch.

Our suggested routine

1. Explain that zero article means no a, an or the is used.
2. Keep the spoken sentence fluent; zero article is not a pause.
3. Contrast go to school with a school and the school.
4. Contrast in hospital with a hospital and the hospital where appropriate to the variety being taught.
5. Show how general music differs from the music in a particular film.
6. Show how have lunch differs from a specific lunch already identified.
7. Ask learners what meaning changes before asking them to choose the article.

After the attempt

What could learners do? What needed another model or a smaller step? Choose one useful adjustment and try the task again.

Notes for our next lesson

Read the full teaching article and listen to the episode at howtoenglishpod.com