Section 12  determiners

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language notes

There are quite a number of small problems associated with particular determiners. This Section deals with points that are most important for beginners and elementary students; other questions are postponed until Oxford English Grammar Course Intermediate and Advanced, in order not to overload students at this level. Two kinds of determiner (articles and possessives) are covered in other Sections for convenience.

Terminology: some determiners are called ‘adjectives’ in older grammar books. The terminology is not very important for students, but in fact determiners have little in common with adjectives except that they come before nouns. Unlike adjectives, some determiners have different singular and plural forms (this/these, that/those, much/many, little/few), which can lead to mistakes:

*Who are this men?
*I don’t have much problems with English grammar.

possible further activities

If you are studying determiners in general (and not just particular ones), you could ask students to see how many different determiners they can find in advertisements, magazines, public notices or other sources (using the internet if necessary).

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language notes

Note that the English two-part division into words for ‘near’ (this, here) and ‘distant’ (that, there) is not necessarily found in students’ mother tongues. They may have a three-part system, with words equivalent to this, that, more distant that and here, there, way over there. Or one of the words for this and that may be much more common than the other, and used informally for both meanings:

*I’m not happy in that country.
*I didn’t like this film yesterday.

possible further activities

‘This/these’ or ‘that/those’? If students need further practice to get used to the difference, you could get them to write sentences comparing things that are close to them and further away in the classroom. (‘This table’s bigger than that table.’) Or, more interestingly, comparing conditions in the country where you are with conditions in another country that students know about, which they call ‘that country’. (‘I prefer the weather in this country. It rains too much in that country.’)

Singular or plural? Hold things up or point to them (sometimes one, sometimes more). Students say what colour they are, or other things about them, using that/those unless they are close to them. (‘Those earrings are red.’ ‘That shoe’s blue.’ ‘This wall is green.’ ‘This student is called Alex.’)

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.

➔ Section 12 continues
language notes

The *some/any* distinction is complicated, and not generally matched in students’ mother tongues. Students may use *any* alone as a negative:

*I’m sorry, I’ve got any money.

or use it with a singular countable noun:

*I haven’t got any dictionary.

They may also miss it out where it is required:

*There aren’t good programmes on TV this evening.

Some very simple rules are given here, which should help students to use these words correctly most of the time. More complete information is given in *Oxford English Grammar Course Intermediate* and *Advanced*.

possible further activities

*Possessions* Students write five or more sentences beginning ‘I haven’t got any …’ (using uncountable or plural nouns).

*Possessions survey* You can extend Exercise 7 (and perhaps introduce some more vocabulary) by getting students to go round asking everybody a question beginning ‘Have you got any …?’ (a different question for each student). Give them five minutes to ask their questions, noting the number of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers; then get them to report to the class, using *some* and *any*. (‘Five people have got some dollars.’ ‘Eight people haven’t got any cousins.’ ‘Everybody has got some friends.’ ‘Nobody has got any rabbits.’)

*Cooking* Get students to think of something that they know how to cook. They write one or more sentences beginning in each of the following ways:

(to cook X) You need a …

You don’t need a …

You need some …

You don’t need any …

This is a good opportunity to teach some more vocabulary.

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language notes

Students may use plural verb forms after *everything* and *everybody/everyone*:

*Everything cost too much.

*Everybody make mistakes.

possible further activities

*Thinking of examples* Ask students to think of examples of the following, or other categories of your choice (as many as they can in five minutes):

something big something small something old something new

something red something sweet something nice something expensive

something cheap somebody tall somebody old somebody nice somebody horrible

somebody handsome somebody beautiful somebody intelligent somebody stupid

somewhere hot somewhere cold somewhere wet somewhere dry somewhere interesting somewhere boring.

Who can think of most? Get them to exchange answers in groups.
**Turning it round**  Give your answers; students have to guess what they correspond to.

‘An apple.’ ‘Something red?’ ‘No.’ ‘Something sweet?’ ‘No.’ ‘Something nice?’ ‘Yes.’

**Survey: ‘Do you ever …?’** Get students to prepare questions (a different one each) about other people’s habits, beginning ‘Do you ever …?’ They should look for things that are probably true of everybody or nobody. If they are slow to think of questions, it might be better to give out prepared questions on cards. A few suggestions:

- Do you ever read the newspaper?
- Do you ever watch daytime TV?
- Do you ever wear an orange hat?
- Do you ever forget people’s names?
- Do you ever sing on the bus?
- Do you ever get very tired?
- Do you ever go without sleep for a week?

Students ask their questions (three minutes to ask as many people as possible), noting the number of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers. Then they report to the class, using ‘everybody’ and ‘nobody’ where appropriate. (‘Six people watch daytime TV.’ ‘Nobody ever sings on the bus.’ ‘Everybody forgets people’s names.’ ‘One person sometimes wears an orange hat.’) With the right kind of class, mildly indiscreet questions can be fun. (‘Do you ever fall in love with the wrong people?’ ‘Do you ever eat too much chocolate?’)

**Internet**  Get students to find three or more interesting sentences on the internet beginning “Why is everybody …?” and three or more beginning “Nobody has ever … “.

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**language notes**

Students may confuse *much* and *many*, especially if their mother tongues only have one word as an equivalent:

* *I can’t cook much things.*

Students should realise that in informal speech and writing, *much* and *many* are unusual in affirmative sentences in most contexts. Alternatives are practised on page 174.

**possible further activities**

**Personalisation**  Get students to write one or more sentences beginning in each of the following ways:

- I don’t know much …
- I don’t know many …
- I haven’t got much …
- I haven’t got many …
- I haven’t been to many …
- I don’t eat much …

**Quiz**  Learners work in small groups. Each group makes up a test containing ten questions beginning ‘How much …’ or ‘How many …?’ Help with vocabulary and sentence structure as necessary. A representative from each group reads the questions out to the class and the rest of the class tries to answer.

**Acting situations**  Get students (perhaps in groups) to mime or act a situation in which there is/are not much/many of something. (For example time, food, chairs, room, water …) They can speak, but not use the word they are illustrating. The other students have to guess what is meant.

**Internet**  Get students to find three or more interesting sentences on the internet beginning “There are not many …” and three or more beginning “There is not much … “.

➔ Section 12 continues
language notes

A lot of, lots of and plenty of are not exactly determiners, but they perform a similar function. They are very common in informal affirmative sentences (where much and many are unusual). Students may have difficulty getting used to the fact that a lot of and lots of can both be used with singular and plural nouns and verbs:

*A lot of my friends is on holiday just now.
*There are lots of food in the fridge.

possible further activities

Extending Exercise 3 Get students to work in groups, and give them ten minutes to write as many sentences as they can about a place of your choice (the room, the school, the local town, another town, another country, …), using the same expressions as in Exercise 3. Help with vocabulary as necessary. Which group can make the most sentences?

Personalisation Get students to write five or more sentences beginning ‘I’ve got a lot of / lots of / plenty of …’ and/or ‘I would like a lot of / lots of / plenty of’.

Acting situations Get students (perhaps in groups) to mime or act a situation in which there is/are a lot of something. (For example cats, books, rain, children, noise, food …) They can speak, but not use the word they are illustrating. The other students have to guess what there is a lot of.

language notes

Beginners may occasionally confuse a little and a few, especially if their mother tongues only have one word as an equivalent:

*I only speak a few French.

The difference in meaning and formality between a little / a few and little/few (with no article) is a more tricky point, perhaps better avoided with lower-level students.

possible further activities

Languages Ask students to tell you about languages that they know just a little of. (‘I speak a little German.’ ‘I know a few words of Japanese.’)

language notes

The spelling of enough is particularly irritating: students may take a little time to get used to it (or to the pronunciation, if they already know how to write it).

The other difficult thing about enough is the word order. As a determiner, it comes before a noun, but when it modifies an adjective it comes after it:

*This coffee isn’t enough hot.

Enough can sometimes follow a noun (‘time enough’), but this is relatively unusual and best ignored at this level.
possible further activities

More practice on word order  Extend Exercise 3 by saying a series of mixed nouns and adjectives – students must repeat the words and add enough, as quickly as they can. Like this:

‘big’ – ‘big enough’ ‘coffee’ – ‘enough coffee’ ‘old’ – old enough
Change to ‘not enough’ to add variety.

Student-led practice  Students can give each other practice on this point, working in groups and taking turns to say nouns and adjectives for the others to add enough to.

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language notes

Some students may confuse too and too much:

*We arrived too much early.

Speakers of some languages may sometimes find it hard to distinguish too and very:

*It was very cold to go out, so we stayed at home.

possible further activities

Student-led practice  As for Exercise 3 on page 176, students can organise practice themselves, working in groups.

Extending Exercise 3  Get students to work in groups. Each group makes a list of things that they are taking for another imagined situation (perhaps a different one for each group). They include too much/many of some things and enough or not enough of others. Possible situations: a weekend skiing; a weekend by the sea; a week in New York; a trek in the Sahara; a year in Antarctica; a space trip. When they are ready, groups take it in turn to tell the rest of the class what they are taking; the class say what they think about the quantities, as in Exercise 3.

Revising quantifiers  This might be a good place for a revision activity practising some, any, not much/many, too much/many, a lot of / lots of / plenty of, a little, a few and (not) enough. Get students to write a few lines about a particular place, trying to use each of these expressions at least once. Or ask them if they can find a complete set of song titles containing all the expressions, using the internet. An interesting but more difficult activity would be to find interesting or funny quotations to exemplify all the expressions, using internet quotation sites.

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language notes

The grammar of all is tricky. It can go in the noun phrase or the verb phrase.

Quite a common mistake is to use all the in generalising:

*All the languages are hard to learn.
*Nearly all the life depends on oxygen.

For more on this, see page 158.

There are also complications with article use and the use of of (not dealt with at this level).

You may need to mention that all doesn’t go immediately before personal pronouns; this is occasionally a problem for beginners:

*All we played very well.

In the verb phrase, the word order is the same as for some adverbs (see pages 214–215).
possible further activities

*Personalisation* Get students to complete some or all of the following sentences (or others of your choice).

All my friends …
I have … all my life.
(Nearly) all children …
(Nearly) all women …
(Nearly) all men …
All countries …
All politicians …
All religions …

*Class survey* In groups, students try to find as many things as possible that they all have in common. (Give a time limit – perhaps 10 or 15 minutes.) Then they report to the class. (‘We all like skiing.’ ‘We all hate pizza.’ ‘We have all been to Thailand.’ ‘We all live in cities.’ ‘We are all under 25.’ ‘We all speak Catalan.’ …)

*Quotations* Using internet quotation sites, students can try to find interesting or amusing quotations beginning or containing:

“all men”  “all women”  “all children”

“All English people / Americans / Germans / Italians / etc”

Do they know, or can they find, a famous quotation from a book by George Orwell beginning “All …”? (‘All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others’, from *Animal Farm*.)

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**page 179**

**language notes**

There can be a slight difference of use between *each* and *every*. *Each* often stresses the sense of ‘one at a time’, ‘separately’ or ‘differently’ (e.g. ‘We looked carefully at each candidate’s individual strengths and weaknesses.’). We don’t trouble students with the point at this level.

possible further activities

*‘Every’ or ‘all’* Say, in quick succession, a series of mixed singular countable nouns and plural nouns. Students repeat them, putting *every* before the singulars and *all* before the plurals. Keep it moving quickly, but not so fast that students get confused. Like this:

‘house’ – ‘every house’  ‘animals’ – ‘all animals’

‘children’ – ‘all children’  ‘country’ – ‘every country’

*Internet* Get students to see if they can find a few ‘parallel’ sentences on the internet, using *every* and *all* to say the same thing. A good place to start is with “*every child*” / “*all children*”.

There are plenty of pairs, for example ‘Every child has the right to education.’ / ‘All children have the right to education.’

*‘Every day’ and ‘all day’ etc* Get students to tell you things that they do *every day* / *morning* / *evening* / etc. Ask if they do them all day. (‘I brush my teeth every day.’ ‘Do you do it all day?’ ‘No!’) Can they think of anything that happens / happened all day / evening / etc? (‘On Monday we have lessons all day.’ ‘On Saturday I played football all afternoon.’)

*Internet* Get students to find a few interesting sentences on the internet using *every day* and *all day*.

➔ Section 12 continues
language notes

Students may take some time to learn when to use *of* after determiners:

*Most of people like music.
*I don't understand some these words.

possible further activities

*General and particular* Get students to think of ten or more generalisations beginning *Most people …, Some people …, Not many people … or A few people ….* (‘Most people like pop music.’ ‘Some people are vegetarians.’ ‘Not many people can play the violin.’ …) Write these up. Then get students to choose one of the generalisations each, and say how many of their friends it’s true of. (‘Most of my friends are vegetarians.’ ‘All of my friends like pop music.’) You may need to add ‘none of’ to the expressions listed.