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 intermediate learners; other questions are postponed until Oxford English Grammar Course 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).

Cartoons  It might be worth drawing attention to the different word order in ‘important enough’ and ‘enough disorder’. Can students see the reason?

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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 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.

This/these and that/those are used in English to indicate not only spatial closeness or distance in space, but also temporal and emotional closeness or distance (see Exercise 1).

The CD-ROM exercises for this Section include practice in distinguishing this and these.

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.’)

**Internet** Get students to check on the internet to see which is more common: “this music” or “that music”? What about “this noise” and “that noise”?

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**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.*

Relatively 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 Advanced*.

The CD-ROM gives practice in distinguishing the weak and strong pronunciations of *some*.

**possible further activities**

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

**Possessions survey** Get each student to go round asking everybody a different question beginning ‘Have you got *any* …?’ (using an uncountable or plural noun). 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 gold.’)

**Possessions: hardly any** Get students to complete this sentence:

I’ve got hardly *any* …

**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 …

You can cook X without any …

This is a good opportunity to teach some more vocabulary.
**Something etc + adjective** You may need to remind students of the structure ‘*something/somebody* etc + adjective’. If practice is needed, ask students to think of examples of some 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.’

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**Possible further activities**

**Imaginary friend** Tell students that you have a friend (or relative, or partner, or lover, or whatever), who is beautiful, and has beautiful possessions. Mention some of his/her attributes and possessions; students have to make sentences beginning ‘He’s/She’s got (some) beautiful …’, using *some* or not as appropriate. Like this:

‘eyes’ – ‘He’s got beautiful eyes.’

‘shirts’ – ‘He’s got some beautiful shirts.’

**Extending Exercise 2** Ask students to write five or more similar sentences about the last time they went shopping.

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**Language notes**

Expressions beginning *none of* are most often followed by a plural verb (e.g. ‘None of us know the answer’). An internet check will show that *none of us are/have/know* are much more common than *none of us is/has/knows*. There is an old prescriptive rule (which some examiners may believe in) according to which a singular verb is supposed to be more ‘correct’ in this structure. Because of this, singular verbs are quite common in formal writing.

**Possible further activities**

**Vocabulary expansion** Teach or revise vocabulary for people who lack something, using definitions with *no*. For example:

*bald*: A bald person has no hair.

*broke* (slang): If you’re broke you’ve got no money.

*naked*: If you’re naked you’re wearing no clothes.

*starving*: If you’re starving you’ve got no food.

*unemployed*: … no work.

*overworked*: … no free time.

*lonely*: … no friends.

*an orphan*: … no parents.

*childless*: … no children.

*friendless*: … no friends.

*homeless*: … no home.

*toothless*: … no teeth.

Then give the definitions; students have to remember the words (without looking at their notes). After that, do it the other way round: say the words, and students have to remember and write/say the definitions.
None of us … Get students to write sentences about things they believe about the whole class, using none of us:

None of us are …
None of us know …
None of us can …
None of us have …

If students are going to have to do formal writing for exams, you might prefer to have them use singular verbs.

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possible further activities

Anybody can … It’s quite common to hear generalisations like ‘Anybody can sing’. Ask students to think of other examples (‘draw, dance, …’). Do they think they are true?

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language notes

Even at this level, students may occasionally confuse much and many, especially if their mother tongues only have one word as an equivalent:

*I can't cook much things.

Students who have learnt mostly from formal written models may not realise that in informal speech and writing, much and many are unusual in affirmative sentences in most contexts.

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 either a singular noun and verb or a plural noun and verb. The verb depends on the noun after a lot of / lots of.

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

possible further activities

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.

Acting situations (2) 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.

⇒ Section 12 continues
Places  Get students to work in groups, and give them five 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, …), beginning:

There is/are plenty of …
There is/are a lot/lots of …
There isn’t much …
There aren’t many …

Help with vocabulary as necessary. Which group can make the most sentences?

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”.

pages 174–175

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.

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

Extending Exercise 1: word order  Extend Exercise 1 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.

OR: 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.

‘Old enough to …’  Get students to write about two or three age-related regulations in their own country/countries. A good way to start is ‘At (age) you are old enough to …’

Personalisation  If there is no risk of feelings being hurt, get students to write three or more sentences about themselves beginning:

I’m old enough to …
I’m not old enough to …
I’m not too old to …
I’m too old to …
**Expeditions** Get students to work in groups. Each group makes a list of things that they are taking on an imagined expedition of your choice. Tell them to include too much/many of some things and enough or not enough of others. 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. Like this:

‘We’re taking ten cameras.’ ‘Too many cameras.’
‘We’re taking a sweater each.’ ‘Not enough warm clothes.’

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.

**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**

Some students may still 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, and may need careful explanation.

The CD-ROM exercises will help students who have difficulty perceiving the article in a little/few.

**possible further activities**

**Personalisation** Ask students to tell you about languages that they know just a little of, or things they know just a little about (‘I speak just a little German.’ ‘I know just a few words of Japanese.’ ‘I know just a little about Chinese history.’)

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**Vocabulary expansion: negative characteristics** Teach or revise adjectives for negative personality traits. For example:

- talkative, reserved, shy, over-confident, aggressive, quarrelsome, timid, nervous, worried, self-critical, intolerant, lazy, untidy, forgetful, disorganised, extravagant

Then get students to write one or more sentences about themselves, or about somebody they know (relative, partner, friend, …), beginning:

- I wish I / X was less …

(*I wish … were is also possible in this structure, but was is perfectly correct in modern English.)*

**Possessions etc** Get students to complete one or both of these sentences:

- I’ve got less … than I’d like.
- I’ve got fewer … than I’d like.

**Class survey** Find out who has got, for example, the fewest pairs of shoes in the class, or the least spare time, or the least distance to travel to the lessons; or who eats the least breakfast; or who spends the least time asleep; …

➔ Section 12 continues
language notes

When all comes in the verb phrase, the word order is the same as for some adverbs (see pages 220–221).

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.

If this is a problem for students, they could benefit from the work on page 160.

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 the 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 by George Orwell.)

Extending Exercise 3  Students may enjoy adding their own ‘puzzle’ sentences to the ones in Exercise 3, for the rest of the class to try to solve.

language notes

A few students may still use plural verb forms after everything and everybody/everyone:

*Everything cost too much.
*Everybody make mistakes.

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’
'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 (1)  Get students to find three or more interesting sentences on the internet beginning “Why is everybody”.

Internet (2)  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.’

Internet (3)  Get students to find a few interesting sentences on the internet using every day and all day.

possible further activities

Vocabulary expansion: parts of the body  Revise or teach the following words for parts of the body (or some of them). All of these can be used with each; only five of them can be used with every (when talking about one person). Ask students which these are?

lung kidney ankle wrist finger rib knuckle elbow knee thumb nostril earlobe hip shoulder shoulder-blade bicep big toe heel vein artery

The other obvious paired parts of the body (breast, nipple, testicle) may be considered taboo items: students will think of them (and teenagers will giggle), but it may not be appropriate to mention them.

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language notes

We often drop the after both (as we do after all). We can say, for example, ‘Both films are interesting’ or ‘Both the films are interesting’, with no difference of meaning.

possible further activities

Similarities  Mention two cities or countries. Students have to find one positive and one negative thing that they have in common, and make sentences with both and neither. (Help with vocabulary if necessary.) For example:

(Dublin and Paris) Both cities are on rivers. Neither city is in England.

(Japan and Mexico) Both countries are in the northern hemisphere. Neither country is in Africa.

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possible further activities

Class survey: favourites  Get students to ask each other (in a walk-round exercise if possible) questions beginning ‘What is your favourite …?’ or ‘What is your least favourite …?’. You could use this activity for vocabulary revision and expansion, giving each student a card with a different question (after pre-teaching the new nouns). Possibilities:

colour, rock band, mammal, reptile, means of transport, leisure activity, city, country, kind of landscape, kind of shop, food, drink, fruit, subject of conversation, subject of study, kind of weather, kind of holiday, month, flower

Questions about people (e.g. favourite singer or writer) should begin ‘Who …?’.
possible further activities

**Personalisation**  Students complete as many as they can of the following sentences:

- I'd like another …
- I'd like another two …
- I'd like another three …
- I'd like another few …
- I'd like another hundred …
- I'd like another million …

**Quiz**  Demonstrate this yourself first of all, and then get students to do it (volunteers or everybody in turn, as you prefer). Think of a category (e.g. luxury cars, Spanish-speaking countries). Mention two, and ask students to write down ‘another two’ or ‘another three’ or ‘another four’, as fast as they can. Who can be first? Like this:

**YOU:** Luxury cars: Mercedes, Porsche. Another two!

**STUDENTS WRITE:** Ferrari, Lamborghini.

**YOU:** Countries beginning with A. Another three.

**STUDENTS WRITE:** Austria, Argentina, Australia.

When students start doing it, they will need a little time to prepare their questions for each other.

possible further activities

**Personalisation**  Get students to complete the following sentences:

- Most people …
- Most of the people I know …

**More personalisation**  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.’ ‘None of my friends like football.’)

**Internet**  Can students find two or three interesting sentences on the internet beginning “Most people”, “Most men”, “Most women”, “Most children”, “Most British people” or “Most Americans” (or similar generalisations about some other group)? Are they true?