The **purpose** of this lesson is to outline the **Determiner System** of English with reference to the 3 kinds of English **Nouns**.

English **Nouns** are nearly always preceded by a specific kind of word which is sometimes referred to as a **Determiner**. **Singular Nouns** must always have a **Determiner**, the most common one of which is the word ‘a’ (‘an’ with nouns beginning with vowel sounds). **Plural** and **N-N Nouns** do not always require a **Determiner**, but they usually are accompanied by one, the most common being the word ‘**some**’.

English has 5 kinds of **Determiners**: **Simple Determiners** (usually referred to as **Indefinite Articles**), **Definite Determiners** (usually called **Definite Articles**), **Possessive Determiners** (usually called **Possessive Adjectives**), **Place Determiners** (often referred to as **Demonstratives**), and **Quantifying Determiners** (often called **Quantifiers**).

**SIMPLE DETERMINERS**: The Simple Determiners are ‘a’, ’an’ and ‘**some**’. They are given the title ‘**simple**’ because they do not have a specific meaning except to determine the kind of noun they are used with. Other simple determiners include ‘**another**’, ‘**each**’ and ‘**every**’ for **Singular Nouns**; ‘**other**’, ‘**some other**’ and ‘**all**’ for **Plural** and **N-N Nouns**. All **Singular Nouns** must have a Simple Determiner unless another kind of Determiner is used. Most **Plural** and **N-N Nouns** are also accompanied by Simple Determiners unless another kind of Determiner is used with them.

**DEFINITE DETERMINERS**: The most common English Definite Determiner is the word 'the'. It is called the Definite Determiner because when it is used, it enables a speaker to refer to a particular thing with a definite reference. ‘**The**’ can be used with all 3 kinds of Nouns. The uses of 'the' in English are quite numerous and in some cases, somewhat unpredictable.

**POSSESSIVE DETERMINERS**: Possessive Determiners refer to the person to whom a Noun belongs. They are all pronouns, and each Possessive Determiner can be used with all 3 kinds of Nouns.

**PLACE DETERMINERS**: English has 4 Place Determiners, ‘**this**’, ‘**that**’, ‘**these**’ and ‘**those**’. Their use is determined both by Noun type and the proximity to the speaker either in location or reference. ‘**This**’ is used with **Singular** and **N-N Nouns** to refer to things physically near the speaker or things the speaker has recently made reference to. ‘**These**’ is the corresponding Place Determiner for **Plural Nouns**. ‘**That**’ refers to things physically distant from the speaker or something other than what the speaker has made verbal reference to. It is used with **Singular** and **N-N Nouns**. ‘**Those**’ is the corresponding Place Determiner for **Plural Nouns**.
QUANTIFYING DETERMINERS: English has several Quantifying Determiners, each with specific and sometimes restrictive uses.

3 Quantifying Determiners are used with Singular Nouns: ‘one’, ‘no’ and ‘any’. One is self-explanatory. ‘No’ and ‘any’ are interesting because they can be used with all 3 kinds of Nouns. ‘Any’ can be used in questions and negative sentences. ‘No’ gives a negative meaning in a grammatically positive sentence.

“Is there any book on the table?”  “No, there isn’t any.”  “No, there is no book there.”
“Are they any books on the table?”  “No, there aren’t any.”  “No, there are no books there.”
“Is there any dust on the table?”  “No, there isn’t any.”  “No, there is no dust there.”

The Quantifying Determiners with Plural and N-N Nouns are used in several, specific ways. They are often contrasted with each other. The quantifiers ‘many’, ‘much’ and ‘a lot of’ (‘lots of’) all refer to a large quantity or amount of something. Many is used with Plural Nouns, and much is used with N-N Nouns. Both of these quantifiers are used in questions and negative sentences. Strangely, neither is used regularly in simple, positive contexts. By contrast, a lot of is used with both Plural and N-N Nouns, and it is used in both positive and negative sentences and in questions.

“Are there many restaurants in town?”  “Yes, there are a lot of restaurants in town.”
“Is there much crime in the area?”  “Yes, unfortunately there is a lot of crime in the area.”

‘Some’ is often used as a Simple Determiner as mentioned above. It is also used as a Quantifying Determiner as well. It is used with both Plural and N-N Nouns, and it gives the meaning of a significant number or amount, but fewer or less than a lot of. When used to express a quantity, the word is usually pronounced with some stress.

“We have had some rain this summer. We usually do.” (no stress on ‘some’)  
“We have had some rain this summer, but not very much.” (Stress on ‘some’)

‘Few’ and ‘a few’, ‘little’ and ‘a little’ refer to quantities or amounts that are not large. Both few and a few are used with Plural Nouns; little and a little are used with N-N Nouns. What is difficult for ELLs to understand is that few and little (often preceded by the word ‘very’) emphasize the smallness of the quantity or amount, while a few and a little in contrast are used to express the significance of the quantity or amount. The meanings are almost the opposite in the intent that the speaker is trying to convey.

“The man has very few friends and very little money.” (He is lonely and poor.)
“The man has a few friends and a little money.” (He is not lonely and not poor)

These 5 kinds of Determiners in one way or another accompany nearly every English Noun. Simple Determiners, Definite Determiners and Quantifying Determiners are particularly difficult for ELLs to master.

This lesson was developed by John Nelson and Tymofey Wowk, 2012