



## Some / Any / 'No Article'

**(This is an extract from my book: 'A' and 'The' Explained).**

We can use some, any or 'no article' (Ø) before plural or uncountable nouns. They all mean something similar to a/an before a singular noun. For example:

- Can I have a banana? [One banana, but any one is okay.]
- Can I have some bananas? [More than one banana, but any small group is okay.]

### **The difference between 'some' and 'no article':**

Often, there isn't a big difference in meaning between 'no article' and 'some'. However, we use 'some' when we are talking about a limited number or amount (but we don't know or we don't want to say the exact quantity).

'Some' means 'a certain number of' or 'a certain amount of'. We don't use 'some' if we are talking about something in general or thinking about it as a category. When we use 'some', we don't say the exact quantity, but we could probably find it out if we needed to. For example:

- Can you buy some milk? [We don't know exactly how much, but I'm talking about a certain amount of milk – I don't want all the milk in the world.]

On the other hand, we use 'no article' when we aren't thinking about the quantity. It's used to talk about the noun as a category, rather than a certain amount of it:

- We need Ø milk to make pancakes. [I'm thinking about milk as a category. I'm not thinking about a certain amount of milk.]

More examples:

- We need to buy Ø coffee [I'm talking about coffee as a category, not thinking about the amount].
- Would you like some coffee? [I mean a certain amount of coffee, probably a cup.]
- I ate some bread [I mean a certain amount of bread].
- I ate Ø bread [not pasta or rice].

Remember that often it doesn't make a big difference:

- Do you want Ø tea? [I'm not thinking about the amount.]

- Do you want some tea? [I'm thinking about the amount, but the meaning is really the same as the first sentence.]

### **The difference between 'some' and 'any':**

Generally, we use 'any' in the same way as 'some': when we are thinking about a certain amount or number of something. Remember, usually both 'some' and 'any' can only be used with plural countable nouns or uncountable nouns, but not usually with singular countable nouns.

We usually use 'some' with affirmative (positive) sentences and 'any' with negatives and questions:

- She bought some tomatoes [positive sentence].
- She didn't buy any tomatoes [negative sentence].
- Did she buy any tomatoes [question]?

However, there are some exceptions to this.

1. 'Any' can be used in a positive sentence to mean 'it's not important which one'. When we use 'any' in this way, it's most often used with singular countable nouns:

- You can take any bus.
- Pass me any glass.
- Come over any Sunday.

2. 'Any' can also be used in positive sentences that have a negative feeling, for example if they include 'never', 'hardly', 'without':

- She never eats any fruit.
- We hardly watch any television.
- Julia left the house without any money.

3. 'Some' can be used in questions when we expect that the answer will be 'yes'. This is very common in offers and requests:

- Would you like some coffee?
- Do you want some sandwiches?
- Could you give me some help?
- Could you pass me some sugar?

Compare the following two sentences:

- Do you have any letters for me? [This is a real question. I don't know if you have any letters or not.]
- Do you have some letters for me? [I think you do, so I'm expecting that you will say 'yes'.]