

*When El and La are more
than definite articles: When
el and la change the
meaning of a word*

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Normally, in Spanish, the difference between the masculine and feminine article makes very little sense to the English-speaker. Therefore, many ignore the rule totally when speaking Spanish. Although, the Spanish which is spoken is not correct, the misuse of the article does not lead to miscommunication. It would be equivalent to saying 'a apple' vs. 'an apple' or 'He don't go to the store' vs. 'He doesn't go the store.' Not the best English but understandable.

However, there are those exceptions in which the incorrect use of the masculine versus feminine article can lead to a break down in communication. In English, it would be equivalent to the difference between 'living at home' versus 'living in a home' or 'I'm going to prison' vs. 'I'm going to the prison.'

The following are nouns in Spanish in which the CORRECT use of the article is pivotal to communication.

el arte

artefact, craft

las artes

fine art

el batería

drummer in a band

la batería

*footlights/ kitchen
utensil*

el cabeza

*head of an
organization/ leader*

la cabeza

head/ skull

el calavera

*reveler/ scum/
madcap*

la calavera

skull

el cámara

cameraman

la cámara

*camera/ chamber/
room/ cavity/
eye socket*

el canal

*canal/ channel/
ditch*

la canal

*carcass/ front edge of
a book/ gutter*

el capital

capital (money)

la capital

*capital (letter)/
capital (city, country)*

el caza

*fighter plane/ pursuit
plane*

la caza

*hunting/ hunt/
game/ trapping*

el cólera

cholera

la cólera

*anger/ fury/
rage/ bile*

el cometa

comet

la cometa

kite

el coma

coma

la coma

comma

el corriente

current month

la corriente

*current/ flow/
stream/ trend*

el corte

*cutting edge (knife),
haircut, cut (electricity),
cut (wound)*

la corte

*court (royal residence),
court (of law)*

el cura

priest

la cura

*cure, care, treatment,
dressing (of a wound)*

el defensa

fullback (in football)

la defensa

defense, protection

el editorial

editorial, leading article

la editorial

publishing house

el facha

fascist

la facha

appearance, look, looks

el final

end, ending, finale, last

la final

*final (match, game,
contest), terminal
(transportation)*

el frente

*front (war), front
(building)*

la frente

forehead, brow

el Génesis

*book of the Old
Testament*

la génesis

origin or beginning

el granuja

*rogue, scoundrel,
rascal, street urchin*

la granuja

loose grapes, seeds

el guardia

guard, traffic policeman

la guardia

*guard, custody,
defense, protection*

el hincha

fan, supporter

la hinchacha

grudge, hatred, enmity

el mañana

tomorrow, future

la mañana

morning

el meta

goalkeeper

la meta

goal, aim, objective

el moral

mulberry tree

las moral

morale, morals

el orden

*law and (order),
method, system*

la orden

*command (in its
military and
ecclesiastic senses)*

el ordenaza

*orderly, employee,
office boy*

la ordenaza

*ordinance, regulation,
arrangement*

el panda

panda (bear)

la panda

gang

el papa

pope

la papa

potato

el pendiente

earring, pendant

la pendiente

*slope, pitch, dip (of a
roof)*

el pez

fish (living)

la pez

pitch, tar

el radio

*radius, spoke (of a
wheel)*

la radio

radio

el recluta

recruit

la recluta

recruitment

el vigía

watchman

la vigía

watchtower

el vocal

*board or committee
member*

la vocal

vowel (letter)