

Article or Preposition (2/2): *du, de la* or *de*?

*Un chef **de** gouvernement. Le chef **du** gouvernement.*
A government leader. The leader of the government.

LESSON

What is it?

When two nouns are linked with the preposition *de*, it can be difficult to know when to use the definite article or not.

What is it like in English?

In English, in similar cases, nouns can be linked by the preposition "of" or the second noun can become an adjective.

a glass of milk → *un verre **de** lait*

a train ticket → *un billet **de** train*

What is it like in French?

Whether to use the preposition *de*, on its own between two nouns or followed by a definite article depends on the meaning attached to it.

- *De* is used on its own when nouns describe a general entity, group or function:

*une directrice **de** projet* → a project director

*un gâteau **d'**anniversaire* → a birthday cake

*les employés **de** banque* → bank staff

– Note that in the above examples, the indefinite articles (*un, une*) and the definite article (*les*) are both used to express a generic meaning.

– Note that in English, the second noun is often translated as an adjective to reflect this generic entity which stands as a class of its own:

*une salle **de** classe* → a classroom

*une nuit **d'**été* → a summer night

If the second noun is specified, it becomes definite and an article has to be introduced:

*Une nuit **de** l'été 1948.* → A night in the summer of 1948.

*Une directrice **du** projet auquel j'ai participé.* → A director of the project I took part in.

- *Du, de la, de l'* are used for one specific entity and not for a group, category or function.

*le ministre **du** Travail* → the Minister of Labour

*le gâteau **de** l'anniversaire de Juliette* → Juliette's birthday cake

*les employés **de la** banque Schtroumpf* → the Smurfs bank staff

EXERCISES

1 Specific or generic? Fill in the gaps with “de vin” or “du vin”.

- a. Buvez de Bourgogne !
- b. Je voudrais un verre
- c. Elle ne boit pas
- d. C’est le début de la saison
- e. Un pichet, s’il vous plaît !
- f. Nous sommes à l’hôtel
- g. Le pressoir permet d’obtenir
- h. Cette recette manque

2 Fill in the gaps with the correct article or preposition.

- a. Sur Flexnit, j’ai vu un extrait film.
- b. Elle a besoin chaussures sport.
- c. Le premier cours section européenne s’est bien passé.
- d. Ils se sont envolés une nuit été.
- e. Les tendances mode automne-hiver 2018-2019 sont arrivées.
- f. La réunion rentrée personnel aura lieu lundi prochain.

3 Translate the following sentences into French.

- a. Where is the French embassy?
→
- b. The director of the school I went to has just died.
→
- c. He is doing his homework on the kitchen table.
→
- d. Seasonal fruits are cheaper.
→

4 Free Writing: Make a statement about a general entity, group or function using the preposition de, d’ and then be more specific using the article du, de la, de l’.

Example: A: – Un chef d’entreprise a un bon salaire.
B: – Oui, c’est le cas du chef de l’entreprise Dufin que je connais bien.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....