**THE DEFINITE ARTICLES: Spanish 1, Marking Period 1**

**DEFINITE ARTICLES**

There are four forms of the definite article in Spanish, all of which translate into English as *the.* They are:

**singular plural**

**masculine** *el los*

**feminine** *la las*

The definite article agrees in gender and number with the noun it modifies.

*el libro the book los libros the books*

*la pluma the pen las plumas the pens*

If a feminine singular noun begins with stressed *a* or *ha,* use *el,* not *la.* For example, *hambre (hunger)* is a feminine noun but in the singular it is stated as *el hambre.* NOTE: *Tengo mucha hambre. [I am very hungry.]*

*el agua the water las agua s the waters*

*el hacha the axe las hacha s the axes*

However, if the definite article is in front of an adjective that precedes the noun, this is not observed.

*la alta montaña the high mountain la árida llanura the arid prairie*

When the preposition *a* or *de* is in front of the definite article *el,* it contracts as follows:   
*a + el* changes to *al* *de + el* changes to *del*

*Voy al parque. I'm going to the park. Vengo del parque. I'm coming from the* *park.*

But if the definite article *el* is part of a denomination or title of a work, there is no contraction: *Los cuadros de El Greco. [The paintings of El Greco.]*

**USES OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE**

The definite article is used:

1. **In front of each noun** even if there is more than one noun stated, as in a series, which is not always done in English:

*Tengo el libro, el cuaderno y la pluma. I have the book, notebook and pen.*

1. With a noun when you make a **general statement:***Me gusta el cafe. I like coffee.*
2. With a noun of **weight or measure:**

*un dólar la libra (un peso la libro) one dollar a pound (one peso per pound)*

4.In front of a noun indicating a **profession, rank, title** followed by the name of the person:

*El profesor Gomez es inteligente. Professor Gomez is intelligent.*

[But when talking directly to the person, when the rank, profession, etc., is mentioned the definite article is not used: *Buenas noches, señor Gomez. Good evening, Mr. Gomez*.]

1. With the **name of a language,** it is optional to use the definite article: *Estudio español.*
2. With the name **of a subject matter:** *Estudio la historia. I study history.*
3. With the **days of the week,** when in English we use “on”: *Voy al cine el sábado. I am  
   going to the movies on Saturday.*
4. With **parts of the body or articles of clothing,** especially if the possessor is clearly stated: *Me pongo el sombrero. I put on my hat.*
5. **With common expressions:** a la escuela – to school; en la iglesia – in church; la semana pasada – last week
6. With the **seasons of the year:** *en la primavera – in the spring; en el verano – in the summer; en el otoño – in the fall/autumn; en el invierno – in the winter*
7. **To show possession with the preposition de + a common noun:** *el libro del alumno – the student's book; los libros de los alumnos – the students' books*

[When a proper noun is used, the definite article is not needed with *de* to show possession: *el libro de Juan -- John's book.*]

12. With names of some cities, countries and continents: *la Argentina, el Brasil, el Canadá, los Estados Unidos, la Habana, la América del Norte, la América Central, la América del Sur*