ENGLISH GRAMMAR WORKSHEET # 1: THE NOUN PHRASE

A. Explain grammatically:

1. Why is the definite article used with some but not all the names of hotels (a,b), and pubs (c,d) in the examples below? Appendix 2 (page 446)

   a. They were staying at Claridge’s.
   b. They were staying at the Savoy.
   c. We had a drink at Joe’s.
   d. We had a drink at the Grenadier.

   The definite article is normally used with names of hotels and pubs and comparable establishments (“ställen där man roar sig”) – but not if the name consists of a genitive! That is because the genitive has already made the name specific, so nothing more is needed.

2. Explain what is wrong in the following sentences. Why do Swedish speakers often make this type of mistake? §4.3.2 (also 8.7 and 8.9.2)

   a. You can’t imagine what a fascinating music they were playing.
   b. She spoke such a good English.

   In English, uncountable nouns and plural countable nouns do not take the indefinite article when used in the generic sense, but in Swedish they often do.

3. What determines the use of the definite article with Sweden in the following sentences?

   a. Sweden was a poor country in the Middle Ages. §4.2
   b. Sweden in the Middle Ages was a poor country. §4.2
   c. The Sweden of the Middle Ages was a poor country. §4.6.2
   d. Medieval Sweden was a poor country. §4.6.3.2
   e. The Sweden that he had read so much about didn’t seem to exist. §§4.2; 4.6.2
   f. Sweden, which he had read so much about, proved less exotic than he had expected. §

   a- The definite article is normally not used with proper nouns (=egennamn).
   b- As above. (The “in”-phrase does not affect article usage.)
   c- However, the definite article is used when the noun has a post-modifier in the form of an of-phrase.
   d- Same as (a) and (b): no definite article. The fact that there is a pre-modifier does not affect the non-use of the definite article.
   e- The definite article is used when the noun has a definite article in the form of a that-clause (or any other kind of restrictive relative clause – see 8.6.5 for an explanation of restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses).
   f- However, there is no definite article when the post-modifier is a non-restrictive relative clause.

Remember:
A restrictive relative clause defines/identifies the subject and it cannot be removed without making the sentence incomplete: The Sweden that/which he had read so much about didn’t seem to exist. (Maybe the Sweden that he found was another kind of Sweden altogether.)
A non-restrictive relative clause gives extra/parenthetical information and it can be removed:
*Sweden, which he had read so much about, didn’t seem to exist. (He crossed over from Denmark but there was no Sweden there – it was gone.)*

**B. The genitive**

Although the following examples are given in pairs, this does not mean that one is correct and the other is wrong, although for many pairs, that is in fact the case. However, sometimes both alternatives are acceptable, although one alternative may be unusual.

Mark the phrases as follows:

**C** (correct usage), **P** (possible, but rather unusual), **U** (unacceptable)

1. a. John’s house **C**  
   b. the house of John **U**
2. a. my uncles’ firm **C**  
   b. the firm of my uncles **U**
3. a. the boy’s toys **C**  
   b. the toys of the boy **U**
4. a. at ten miles’ distance **C**  
   b. at a distance of ten miles **C**
5. a. a day’s walk **C**  
   b. the walk of a day **U**
6. a. the dog’s legs **C**  
   b. the legs of the dog **P**
7. a. summer’s happy memories **U**  
   b. the happy memories of summer **C**
8. a. the word’s meaning **P**  
   b. the meaning of the word **C**
9. a. England’s queen **P/C**  
   b. the queen of England **C**
10. a. the lark’s song **C**  
    b. the song of the lark **C**
11. a. the boat’s colour **P**  
    b. the colour of the boat **C**
12. a. Charles’s book **C**  
    b. Charles’ book **C**
13. a. this week’s news **C**  
    b. the news of this week **U**
14. a. Sweden’s Prime Minister **C**  
    b. the Prime Minister of Sweden **C**
15. a. in a month or two’s time **C**  
    b. in a month’s or two time **U**

**Remember:**

Sometimes, especially with animals, you have a choice. Also, forming the genitive with ‘s is becoming more and more common, even in places where you would traditionally use the of-construction.

§§4.5.1; 4.5.2

**C. Concord: singular or plural?**

1. There was/were plenty of fish in the river. §4.4.1
   
   *Fish takes the zero plural unless you are talking about different types of fish or about the entire species: Fishes breathe by means of gills.*

2. Physics is/are my favourite subject. §4.4.2.1
   
   *A science or subject ending in –ics takes the singular form of the verb unless what is referred to is its practical application: Acoustics is my favourite subject. — The acoustics here are dreadful.*

3. The headquarters of the company is/are in London. §4.4.1

4. I have found a pair of scissors. (Is it)/Are they yours? §4.4.2.2

5. The police has/have not caught the girl yet. §4.4.2.2

   *People, police, cattle take the plural form of the verb. If you are talking about one person or animal (en polis etc), say police officer, person, head of cattle.*
6. **Is/Are** the United States poor? §4.4.5.2

7. Every man and woman **has/have** got the right to be in love. §§4.4.5.2; 8.8.4
   *All words starting with every take the singular form of the verb (the idea is that you see each person individually).*

8. Measles **is/are** infectious and so **is/are** mumps. §4.4.2.1

9. The **moral/morals** of the story **was/were** that his **moral/morals** **was/were** non-existent. §4.4.3

10. Neither the man nor the girl **was/were** pleased with the flat. §§4.4.5.2; 8.8.2
    *Both the singular and the plural are correct after neither but the singular is more formally correct while the plural is more colloquial.*

11. The family **has/have** always been known for the intelligence of its members. §4.4.4
    *Collective nouns take the singular when thought of as a singular unit of meaning.*

12. His family **is/are** early risers. §4.4.4
    *Collective nouns take the plural when you have the individuals in mind rather than the unified whole.*

13. Not only England but also the European countries **was/were** against it. §4.4.5.2
    *The rule of attraction: the verb agrees with the number of the closest noun.*

14. Not only the European countries but also England **was/were** against it. §4.4.5.2
    *As above.*

15. Part of London was laid in **ash/ashes** in 1666 and it **was/they were** removed later. §4.4.3

16. His wages **was/were** quite low. §4.4.2.2

17. Linguistics **deal/deals** with the description of language. §4.4.2.1
    *See question number 2.*

18. Only one or two students **was/were** present at the lecture.
    *The focus is on the individuals.*

19. The acoustics here **is/are** dreadful. §4.4.2.1
    *See question number 2.*

20. Have the girls made up their (mind)/**minds** yet? §4.4.5.1
    *Logical plurals.*

21. About half the class **was/were** absent.
    *The focus is on the group as a unit or on the individual members of the group.*

22. The great majority of people never **think/thinks** about it.
    *The focus is on the individuals.*
23. The majority against him was/were as small as it could be.
   The focus is on the group as a unit.

24. A considerable number of the students was/were involved in the project. §8.8.6.1
   The focus is on the individuals.

25. The number of students involved in the project was/were considerable. §8.8.6.1
   The focus is on the group as a unit.

D. Most of the following sentences contain errors that are often made. Correct the sentences that are wrong.
1. My father’s country house, which you visited about two year ago, has recently been sold.
   → years

2. Many people are dissatisfied with their lot in the life. §§4.3.2; 4.6.3.1
   Uncountable nouns with a generic meaning do not take the definite article. (Life as a general phenomenon is uncountable.)

3. What a dreadful weather! §§4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.6.1
   Uncountable nouns do not take the indefinite article.

4. I am staying at the Sheraton this week. Svartvik/Sager §194
   Names of hotels and pubs and similar establishments take the definite article unless the name consists of a genitive.

5. She has very limited knowledges in German. §§4.3.1; 4.3.2
   → a very limited knowledge of
   Knowledge is an uncountable noun and therefore always singular. Note that uncountable nouns do not normally take the indefinite article—but this one can, provided that it is preceded by an adjective and followed by an of-phrase.

6. Here are the money I owe you. §4.3.2
   → is
   Money is an uncountable noun and therefore always singular.

7. My brother-in-law has more than 200 sheeps. §4.4.1
   → sheep
   Sheep has a zero plural: the plural form is identical to the singular form.

8. It is a hard work to write a book. §4.6.1
   Uncountable nouns do not take the indefinite article. (Work can be both countable and uncountable, with different meanings.)

9. My sister is a chairman of the local bridge club. §4.6.1
   The indefinite article is used when the noun phrase functions as a predicative which identifies/describes/classifies the subject, except when the noun phrase refers to a position that can only be occupied by person at a time.

10. Bill wants to be a police officer when he grows up. §4.4.2.2
    Police is a plural noun. Police officer, policeman, policewoman are singular nouns. This is
particularly difficult for Swedish learners, since polis is a singular noun in Swedish.

11. This is my brother’s-in-law cap.
   → brother-in-law’s
   Remember the difference between brothers-in-law (plural) and brother-in-law’s (singular, genitive.)

12. This is a too great an honour for me. §4.6.1

13. Have you ever seen the river of Ganges river? §4.2 and Svartvik/Sager §190
    All bodies of water except lakes take the definite article.
    BrE: the word river comes before the name: the (river) Thames
    AmE: the word river comes after the name: the Amazon (river)

14. We have just come back from the island of Crete. §4.5.2