

Articles are the words 'a' or 'an' and 'the', which come before nouns. There are two articles - 'a' (or 'an') and 'the'.

A or *an* is known as the Indefinite Article, because it usually leaves indefinite the person or thing spoken of. Such as;

A nurse- which means any nurse.

The is known as the definite article, because it normally points out some particular person or thing. Such as;

He saw **the** nurse - which means some particular nurse.

The definite article is used before singular countable nouns, plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns. For instance;

The book; or **the** books; or **the** milk.

The choice between 'a' and 'an' is determined by sound. Before a word beginning with a vowel sound 'an' is used. Such as;

An ass; **an** enemy ; **an** orange ; **an** hour ; **an** heir.

It should be noticed that the words hour, honest, heir, begin with a vowel sound, as the initial consonant 'h' is not pronounced.

Before a word beginning with a consonant sound 'a' is used. For instance;

A boy ; **A** union ; **A** horse ; **A** European ; **A** university ; **A** woman

In such words (university, union, etc.) the beginning is with a consonant sound, that of 'yu'. In similar way, we can say that;

A one-rupee note; Such **a** one ; **A** one-eyed woman.

This is because one begins with the consonant sound of 'w'.

P.S. - Some native speakers use 'an' before words beginning with 'h' if the first syllable is not stressed. For instance;

An hotel (more common usage is 'a hotel')

An historical book (more common usage 'a historical novel')

Definite Article:

The definite article 'the' is used for following uses -

1. When a particular person or thing, or one already referred to (that is, when it is clear from the context which one is meant). Such as;

The book you want is out of print. (It means which book? the one you want).

The boy cried. (the boy means 'the boy already talked about')

2. When a singular noun is meant to represent a whole class. Such as;

The dog is **a** useful animal.

3. 'The' is used before some proper names like the following kinds of place names;

Oceans and seas (**the** Pacific, **the** Atlantic), rivers (**the** Nile, **the** Amazon), canals (**the** Panama Canal), deserts (**the** Kalahari, **the** Sahara), groups of islands (**the** West Indies), mountain ranges (**the** Himalayas, **the** Andes), names of nations like republics and kingdoms (**the** Ukraine, **the** United Kingdom, **the** Hague).

4. Before names of things unique of their kind. Such as;

The sun ; **the** sky ; **the** earth.

5. Before a proper noun when it is qualified by an adjective or a definite adjectival clause. Such as;

The great Caesar ; **the** immortal Shakespeare.

6. With Superlatives, 'the' is used. For instance;

The darkest cloud has a silver lining.

This is **the** best book of elementary physics.

7. 'The' is used with ordinals. Such as;

She was **the** first woman to arrive.

8. As an adverb with comparatives. Such as;

The more the merrier. (this means - by how much more, by so much the merrier)

9. 'The' is used before musical instruments. Such as;

He can play **the** guitar.

10. Before a noun to give the impact of a Superlative. For example;

The verb is **the** word in a sentence.

Indefinite Article

The indefinite article is used in following four cases -

1. In its original numerical sense of one. For instance;

Twelve inches make **a** foot.

Not **a** word was uttered.

2. In the vague sense of a certain. Such as;

One evening **a** beggar came to my door.

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A Rajnikant is suspected by the detective. (means a certain person named Rajnikant)

3. In the sense of *any*, to single out an individual as the representative of a class. Such as;

A pupil should obey his teacher.

A goat is a useful animal.

4. To make a common noun of a proper noun. Such as;

A Daniel come to judgement. (A Daniel means a very wise man)

The rules for Article usage are summarized in the table below:

a	an	the	no article
indefinite article with consonants (b,c,d,f,g...z)	indefinite article with vowels (a,e,i,o,u)	definite article <u>regardless</u> whether the noun starts with a consonant or a vowel	-
<u>not</u> specifically known to the person you are speaking with singular nouns	<u>not</u> specifically known to the person you are speaking with singular nouns	specific object that <u>both</u> the speaker and the listener <u>know</u> plural nouns	general things uncountable nouns
-	-	collection of states in a country (The United States of America, The UK, The Irish Republic)	countries, states, counties, provinces, lakes, mountains
-	-	Multiple areas: The Philippines, The Netherlands, the British Isles	others: sports, meals, places, transport, rivers, oceans, seas
-	-	Geographical points in the globe (the North Pole, the equator)	-
-	-	one and only particular thing (the sun, the moon, the wind, the Buckingham Palace)	-



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