

## ARTICLE

RULE: **An article** is a word which is placed in front of a noun to indicate its status. English has two types of articles: INDEFINITE ('a' and 'an') and DEFINITE ('the').

'a' is used in front of consonant sounds and 'an' in front of vowel sounds.

### Uses of Indefinite Article a or an

1. Before a singular noun which is countable (a man, a chair, a woman etc..) when it is mentioned for the first time and represents no particular person or thing.

**EXAMPLE:** In our class there is an American girl and a European girl.  
She lives in a big house.  
Could you lend me an ink-pen?

2. To talk about any one member of a class in general.

**EXAMPLE:** A doctor must like people (any doctor).  
An owl is a night bird.  
A child needs love.

3. With a noun complement including names of professions to classify people and things—to say what class, group or type they belong to:

**EXAMPLE:** Lalitha is a teacher. Her husband is a doctor.  
She's an architect.  
He's looking forward to being an engineer.  
What's that noise? I think it's a helicopter.  
Don't use your plate as an ashtray.

4. In certain numerical expressions:

**EXAMPLE:** a couple                      a hundred                      a dozen                      a quarter  
half a dozen                      a score                      a great many                      a decade

5. In expressions of price, speed, ratio etc.:

**EXAMPLE:** five rupees a kilo                      Rs100/- a meter  
hundred kilometers an hour                      three times a day

6. With **few** and **little**: A **few** (used with countable nouns) means a small number. A **little** (used with non-count nouns) means a small amount.

When **few** and **little** are used without an article, they give an almost negative meanings and can usually be replaced by **hardly, any**:

**EXAMPLE:** There are a few students in the class  
There are **few** students (almost negative meaning)  
There are **hardly** any students (almost negative meaning)



7. With singular countable nouns in exclamations after what or such.

**EXAMPLE:** What a lovely dress! Such a pity!

8. Some uncountables take **a/an** when used in particular sense or to express the meaning a type of or a portion of.

**EXAMPLE:** Have you got **a shampoo** for dry hair? ( a particular type of shampoo)

**Three teas**, please. (three cups of tea)

We need a secretary with a **knowledge of English**. (Knowledge of a particular subject)

9. Exception to the above: some uncountable nouns (eg weather, progress) cannot normally be used in this way.

**EXAMPLE:** We're having **terrible weather** (not a **terrible weather**)

You've made **very good progress** (not a **very good progress**)

She speaks **very good English** (not a **very good English**)

10. Difference of meaning between the same word with or without an article:

**RULE:** Experience and an experience?

**Experience** means practice in doing (something) and it is uncountable.

**An experience** means something which happens to someone, it is countable.

**EXAMPLE:** **Experience** is the best teacher.

I had a **terrible experience** yesterday (bad event)

We had an **exciting experience** of camping last year.

11. Material nouns like glass, wood, iron, stone, paper, cloth, wire coffee, tea, etc are uncountable. But they take an article (**a/an**) when they denote one particular thing.

**EXAMPLE:** Windows made of **glass** but I have a **glass of water**. (a tumbler)

We write on **paper** but I have got a **paper** (newspaper)

**Iron** is a metal but I use an **iron**. (electric iron)

12. **A/an** is not used before abstract nouns: **EXAMPLE:** Beauty, happiness, sorrow, fear, hope, death, etc. But **a /an** is used before these nouns if they are used in particular sense.

**EXAMPLE:** His face is shining with **happiness**.

Some children suffer from **fear** of the dark.

13. **A/an** is not used before names of meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) but we use **indefinite article** if they are preceded or if it is a special meal offered to celebrate something.

**EXAMPLE:** We have **breakfast** at eight (name of meal).

They give us a **good breakfast** every day.

We have been invited to a **dinner** given to welcome the new manager.



14. **a/an** cannot be used in exclamations with uncountable nouns and plurals.

EXAMPLE:      What nonsense!                      What luck!                      What pretty girls!

15. **A** can be used before Mr./Mrs/Miss/Ms. +surname to refer to one of many persons of the same name.

EXAMPLE:      **A Mr. Smith** came for you yesterday ( a man called Smith, who is a stranger to the speaker .

16. We can use **a/an** with an adjectives and a noun to give more information about someone or something.

EXAMPLE:      He seemed **a worried man**.

It was **a really beautiful house**.

17. We can also use **a/an** with a noun followed by a qualifier, such as a prepositional phrase or a relative clause, when we want to give more information about someone or something:

EXAMPLE:      I close **a picture that reminded me of my country**.

The information was contained in **an article on Biology**.

18. Indefinite articles are not used before plural nouns and uncountable nouns.

EXAMPLE:      Will you please give me **an advice**?      (Wrong)

Will you please give me **a piece of advice**. (Correct)

Here is **a good news** for you      (Wrong)

Here is **a piece of good news** for you. (Correct)



### Use of Definite Article 'the'

1. With singular and plural countable nouns, and uncountable nouns

EXAMPLE: **the** man, **the** shoes, **the** water

2. When the listener or reader knows exactly which person or thing we mean:

EXAMPLE: Here is the address you were looking for.

She is the lady who won the prize.

3. To talk about people and things that we have already mentioned

EXAMPLE: Last night I saw an interesting program about dolphins. I enjoyed the program.

A letter came from Ritu this morning. Did I show you the letter?

4. When we say which people or things we mean.

EXAMPLE: 'Where's Srinivas?' ' He is in the bathroom?' (the bathroom in the house)

Isn't this room hot? I'll open the window (the window in this room)

5. When there is only one of something.

EXAMPLE: The sun, the moon, the sky, the earth, the world, the government, the railways, etc.

I enjoy watching the moon.

Would you like to travel round the world?

6. We sometimes use '**the**' with a singular countable noun to talk about something in general—for example, with the names of animals, flowers and plants.

EXAMPLE: The dolphin is an intelligent animal.

The rose is a lovely flower.

7. We also use **the** in a general sense with the names of musical instruments and scientific inventions.

EXAMPLE: The violin is more difficult to play than the piano.

Marconi invented the radio.

8. **The** is used with a number of general expressions that refer to our physical environment (the use of **the** suggests that everybody is familiar with what we are talking about)

EXAMPLE: the rain the weather the wind the future the universe the sun  
shine

9. We can use **the** before some adjectives with a general meaning;

EXAMPLE: The young should listen to the old

10. We also use **the** before some words that signify nationality.

EXAMPLE: The English drink a lot of tea.



11. We use **'the'** with these place-names when they included a countable noun eg.  
union, republic, states, kingdom, isle.

EXAMPLE: the United States, the United Kingdom

12. We also use **the** with plural place names: EXAMPLE: the Netherlands, the Alps

13. We also use **the** with various others of these place names  
EXAMPLE: the North/South pole, the Arctic/Antarctic, the Middle East, the Far East.

14. We normally use **the** with the names of:  
EXAMPLE: oceans and seas (the Pacific); rivers (the Nile), canals (the Suez Canal),  
deserts (the Sahara), island groups (the Andamans), hotels (The Taj), museums (the  
British Museum), restaurants, pubs (the Hard Rock Cafe), mountain groups (the  
Himalayas)

15. **The** is used before a noun which has become definite by the addition of a phrase or  
clause. EXAMPLE: The girl in blue is my sister.

This is the place where I met him.

16. Before superlatives and first,  
second etc.  
EXAMPLE: This is the highest building in the most our town.  
I am doing the last unit.

17. Before names consisting of adjective + noun (provided the adjective is not East,  
West etc) EXAMPLE: the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast, the New Forest, the High Street

18. Before the names of meals if these are qualified by a  
clause: EXAMPLE: The dinner you gave last night was  
sumptuous.

The tea we got in the train was rather disappointing.

19. **The** is used with titles and the person's name is omitted.  
EXAMPLE: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Queen of England

20. The is used with the plural surname to mean (the..... family)  
The Agarwals (Mr and Mrs Agarwal and children)

