

ARTICLES

What Are Articles?

Articles are words that define a noun as specific or unspecific. Consider the following examples:

EXAMPLE: After the long day, the cup of tea tasted particularly good.

By using the article *the*, we've shown that it was one specific day that was long and one specific cup of tea that tasted good.

EXAMPLE: After a long day, a cup of tea tastes particularly good.

By using the article *a*, we've created a general statement, implying that any cup of tea would taste good after any long day.

English has two types of articles: definite and [indefinite](#). Let's discuss them now in more detail.

The Definite Article

The definite article is the word *the*. It limits the meaning of a noun to one particular thing. For example, your friend might ask, "Are you going to the party this weekend?" The definite article tells you that your friend is referring to a specific party that both of you know about.

The definite article can be used with singular, plural, or uncountable nouns.

Below are some examples of the definite article *the* used in context:

Please give me the hammer.

Please give me the red hammer; the blue one is too small.

Please give me the nail.

Please give me the large nail; it's the only one strong enough to hold this painting.

Please give me the hammer and the nail.

The Indefinite Article

The indefinite article takes two forms. It's the word *a* when it precedes a word that begins with a consonant. It's the word *an* when it precedes a word that begins with a vowel. The indefinite article indicates that a noun refers to a general idea rather than a particular thing. For example, you might ask your friend, "Should I bring *a* gift to the party?" Your friend will understand that you are not asking about a specific type of gift or a specific item. "I am going to bring *an* apple pie," your friend tells you. Again, the indefinite article indicates that she is not talking about a specific apple pie. Your friend probably doesn't even have any pie yet. The indefinite article only appears with singular nouns.

Consider the following examples of indefinite articles used in context:

Please hand me a book; any book will do.

Please hand me an autobiography; any autobiography will do.

Exceptions: Choosing A or An

There are a few exceptions to the general rule of using *a* before words that start with consonants and *an* before words that begin with vowels. The first letter of the word *honor*, for example, is a

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consonant, but it's unpronounced. In spite of its spelling, the word *honor* begins with a vowel sound. Therefore, we use *an*. Consider the example sentence below for an illustration of this concept.

Incorrect: My mother is a honest woman.

Correct: My mother is an honest woman.

Similarly, when the first letter of a word is a vowel but is pronounced with a consonant sound, use *a*, as in the sample sentence below:

Incorrect: She is an United States senator.

Correct: She is a United States senator.

This holds true with acronyms and initialisms, too: an LCD display, a UK-based company, an HR department, a URL.

Article Before an Adjective

Sometimes an article modifies a noun that is also modified by an adjective. The usual word order is article + adjective + noun. If the article is indefinite, choose *a* or *an* based on the word that immediately follows it. Consider the following examples for reference:

Correct: Eliza will bring a small gift to Sophie's party.

Correct: I heard an interesting story yesterday.

Indefinite Articles with Uncountable Nouns

Uncountable nouns are nouns that are either difficult or impossible to count. Uncountable nouns include intangible things (e.g., information, air), liquids (e.g., milk, wine), and things that are too large or numerous to count (e.g., equipment, sand, wood). Because these things can't be counted, you should never use *a* or *an* with them—remember, the indefinite article is only for singular nouns. Uncountable nouns can be modified by words like *some*, however. Consider the examples below for reference:

Incorrect: Please give me a water.

Water is an uncountable noun and should not be used with the indefinite article.

Correct: Please give me some water.

However, if you describe the water in terms of countable units (like bottles), you can use the indefinite article.

Correct: Please give me a bottle of water.

Incorrect: Please give me an ice.

Correct: Please give me an ice cube.

Correct: Please give me some ice .

Note that depending on the context, some nouns can be countable or uncountable (e.g., hair, noise, time):

Correct: We need a light in this room.

Correct: We need some light in this room.

Using Articles with Pronouns

Possessive pronouns can help identify whether you're talking about specific or nonspecific items. As we've seen, articles also indicate specificity. But if you use both a possessive pronoun and an article at the same time, readers will become confused. Possessive pronouns are words like *his*, *my*, *our*, *its*, *her*, and *their*. Articles should not be used with pronouns. Consider the examples below.

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Incorrect: Why are you reading the my book?

The and *my* should not be used together since they are both meant to modify the same noun. Instead, you should use one or the other, depending on the intended meaning:

Correct: Why are you reading the book?

Correct: Why are you reading my book?

Omission of Articles

Occasionally, articles are omitted altogether before certain nouns. In these cases, the article is implied but not actually present. This implied article is sometimes called a “zero article.” Often, the article is omitted before nouns that refer to abstract ideas. Look at the following examples:

Incorrect: Let’s go out for a dinner tonight.

Correct: Let’s go out for dinner tonight.

Incorrect: The creativity is a valuable quality in children.

Correct: Creativity is a valuable quality in children.

Many **languages and nationalities** are not preceded by an article. Consider the example below:

Incorrect: I studied the French in high school for four years.

Correct: I studied French in high school for four years.

Sports and academic subjects do not require articles. See the sentences below for reference:

Incorrect: I like to play the baseball.

Correct: I like to play baseball .

Incorrect: My sister was always good at the math .

Correct: My sister was always good at math .

Use 'A' before a word which begins with a consonant sound.

a man	a movie	a school	a city
a pen	a star	a shoe	a teacher
a boy	a bike	a bottle	a website
a car	a student	a mouse	a dollar
a fish	a watch	a tiger	a machine
a house	a computer	a camera	a game

Use 'AN' before a word which begins with a vowel sound

an umbrella	an American	an ice-cream
an elephant	an automobile	an ambulance
an actor	an airplane	an offer
an emergency	an ant	an equipment

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ARTICLES EXERCISE

Complete the following sentences using appropriate articles.

In some cases, no articles are needed.

- man is mortal.
- I am university student.
- She goes to the temple in mornings.
- Kiran is best student in the class.
- camel is the ship of the desert.
- This book has won Booker prize.
- Harishchandra was honest king.
- I am fond of classical music.
- I met boy in the store.
- Gold is precious metal.
- She returned after hour.
- There is institution for blind in this city.

Answers

- Man is mortal. (No article is needed.)
- I am a university student.
- She goes to temple in the mornings.
- Kiran is the best student in the class.
- The camel is the ship of the desert.
- This book has won the Booker prize.
- Harishchandra was an honest king.
- I am fond of classical music. (No article is needed.)
- I met a boy in the store.
- Gold is a precious metal.
- She returned after an hour.
- There is an institution for the blind in this city.

Fill in: The, a, an or --- (leave blank)

- I have just had _____ great idea.
- Columbus was one of _____ first people to cross _____ Atlantic.
- _____ British drink too much tea.
- _____ Thames flows into _____ North Sea.
- Judith earns € 2000 _____ month.
- Dancing is _____ more interesting activity than reading.
- As _____ captain of _____ ship I have _____ complete authority.
- _____ people we met on _____ holiday in _____ north of England came from _____ USA.
- What's on _____ TV today?
- He was doing eighty miles _____ hour on _____ motorway.
- How many hours do you work on _____ average?
- You are _____ first to reach the top.
- The people who live in _____ Netherlands are called _____ Dutch. 14. The burglar hit me on _____ back of my neck.
- _____ Football is his whole life.
- I try to go for _____ run four times _____ week.
- Did you read _____ book I gave you?
- Sally went to _____ prison to visit her husband.
- This is _____ only cinema in the area.

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20. _____ People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw _____ stones.
21. Do you go to _____ church on Sundays?
22. This is _____ man I told you about.
23. This is exactly _____ job I was looking for.
24. _____ Trafalgar Square is near _____ Charing Cross Station.
25. _____ little knowledge is _____ dangerous thing.
26. _____ Philosophers seem to think that life is _____ mystery.
27. I need time to think about _____ offer you made.
28. I can't play _____ piano but I can play _____ guitar.
29. There was _____ time when I enjoyed _____ skating.
30. The worst part of living in a tent is _____ lack of space.
31. _____ most cars start badly on _____ cold mornings.
32. _____ Prime Minister will give a speech this afternoon.
33. _____ Tower of London is one of _____ main attractions of London.
34. I haven't been to _____ concert like that before.
35. I was in _____ pain after I twisted my ankle.
36. Of all these cars I prefer _____ Japanese one.
37. Neil Armstrong made _____ first footprint on _____ moon.
38. Where are _____ scissors you borrowed last week?
39. It's _____ long way by train to _____ south of France.
40. _____ French drink a lot of wine.

ANSWERS

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Fill in an article (THE, A, AN) where necessary – or leave blank !

1. _____ Teachers are like _____ weather, one minute they're good, _____ other they're bad.
2. Jake took out _____ beer opened it and drank _____ cold beer from _____ bottle.
beer always tasted better from _____ bottle.
3. She is on _____ diet, so she ordered _____ calorie-free dinner.
4. We'd like to have _____ wedding in _____ early fall, in early October if possible.
5. Emma's eyes rested on _____ letter. Here was _____ opportunity she had been waiting for.
6. The plane was climbing up through _____ sky.
7. My grandmother was _____ true original. Strong of character, she ruled our family with iron hand.
8. Maxim was at _____ centre of her thoughts.
9. Winston Churchill, _____ former Prime Minister of England, went to _____ Harrow.
10. _____ Marmalade is usually made from _____ oranges.
11. I live in _____ apartment, which is brand new.
12. _____ *Royals* is a serial which portraits _____ life of _____ members of _____ Royal family in _____ United Kingdom.
13. It was _____ cold Saturday morning at _____ beginning of _____ month.
14. It had rained earlier in the day and as Maggie left the house she lifted her eyes towards sky.
15. I arrived I _____ USA last Monday. We left _____ Rome, flew over _____ Alps and made a quick stop in London.
16. Before we landed at _____ JFK airport, we saw _____ Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and _____ Empire State building.
17. _____ Most children like _____ sweets.
18. Jane's husband got home early from _____ work.
19. Last year we visited _____ St. Paul's Cathedral and _____ Tower of London.
20. Our friends, _____ Millers, moved to Florida last summer.
21. Our children go to school by _____ bus.

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22. She likes _____ Indian tea but she doesn't like _____ tea that comes from _____ Ceylon.
23. _____ President of the United States is giving a speech tonight.
24. The two countries reached _____ peace after a long, disastrous war.
25. We needed _____ house to live in when we were in London.
26. _____ Elephants are intelligent animals.
27. This is a book on _____ Irish history.
28. She had laughing eyes and _____ most charming mouth.
29. I'll book _____ sleeper on _____ Geneva-Paris train tomorrow,
30. I'm tired. I think I'll be going to _____ bed.
31. We need to be at _____ airport in _____ hour.
32. Their car does over a hundred miles _____ hour.
33. Carol's father works as _____ electrician.
34. _____ Milk is rich in _____ nutrients.
35. _____ Money is one of _____ most important things in _____ life.
36. _____ Dogs make wonderful pets.
37. Do you happen to know who invented _____ camera?

ANSWERS

1. Teachers are like **THE** weather, one minute they're good, **THE** other they're bad.
2. Jake took out **A** beer opened it and drank **THE** cold beer from **THE** bottle. A beer always tasted better from **THE** bottle.
3. She is on diet, so she ordered **A** calorie-free dinner.
4. We'd like to have **THE** wedding in early fall, in early October if possible.
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10. Marmalade is usually made from oranges.
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Fill in the correct article (A , AN or THE) where necessary – or leave blank !

1. _____ modern life is stressful.
2. What's _____ capital of your country?
3. _____ doctor earns more than _____ teacher.
4. Do you know who invented _____ computer ?
5. Have you seen _____ newspaper? I can't find it anywhere.
6. Is this _____ first time you've stayed at _____ Hilton ?
7. Is _____ Nile or _____ Amazon _____ longest river on _____ earth ?
8. Several million visitors _____ year are attracted to _____ ski slopes of _____ Alps.
9. I'll meet you outside _____ post office. I'll be there in _____ quarter of _____ hour.
10. _____ young people tend to think that _____ life was more difficult in _____ past.
11. In my opinion _____ education should be free.
12. _____ education I got at _____ school was excellent.

Articles in English Grammar

13. In some cities, _____ cars have been banned from the centre.
14. I went to _____ Buckingham Palace today. It was great.
15. I took _____ train to London and then _____ underground to _____ Victoria Station. It's _____ short walk from there.
16. Would you like to come with us to see _____ *Titanic* at the cinema tomorrow?
17. I had _____ experience at work today.
18. The car sped past at 100 miles _____ hour.
19. _____ Mount Everest is the highest mountain in _____ world.
20. _____ Middle East is one of the world's hot spots.
21. We lived in _____ Netherlands before moving here.
22. If you ever go to London you must see _____ Tower of London and _____ Tate Gallery.
23. We noticed _____ strong smell coming from _____ refrigerator.
24. She lives in _____ England, which is part of _____ UK.
25. After his wife's death he left _____ home and joined _____ army.
26. He should have called me _____ hour ago.
27. They visited grandmother in _____ hospital.
28. _____ history is an interesting subject, but what I like most is _____ history of the United States.
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30. Munich lies in _____ south of Germany.

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