

Articles? Easy!

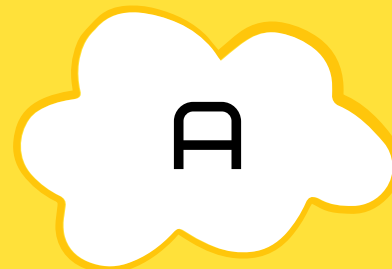
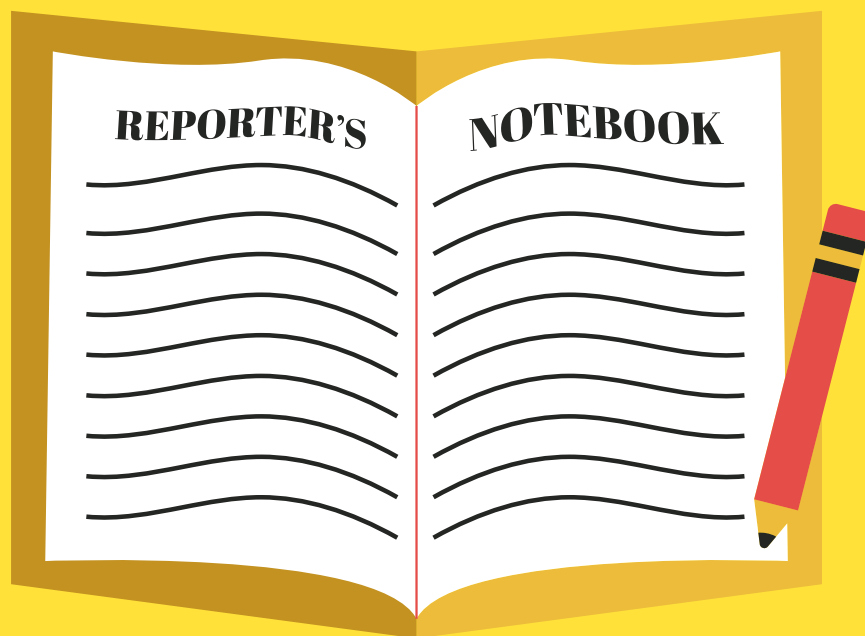


What is the article?



An article is a word that modifies or describes the Noun. It is used before the noun to show whether it refers to something specific or not.

There are three types of articles in the English language, they are zero article (-), indefinite articles (a, an) and definite article (the).



Indefinite Article A/An

A determiner (a, an) that introduces nonspecific nouns and noun phrases.



When to use A: If the initial sound of the noun when pronounced is a consonant sound, “a” is used.

a bowl

a gnat



When to use An: If the initial sound of the noun when pronounced is a vowel sound, “an” is used.



an apple

an honor

Indefinite Article A/An is used

1 When the speaker presents the object as belonging to a certain class in the meaning of «какой-нибудь», «некий».



*It happened in a small town.
He bought a book yesterday.*

2 When a person or a thing is mentioned for the first time. After the first reference the definite article is used.

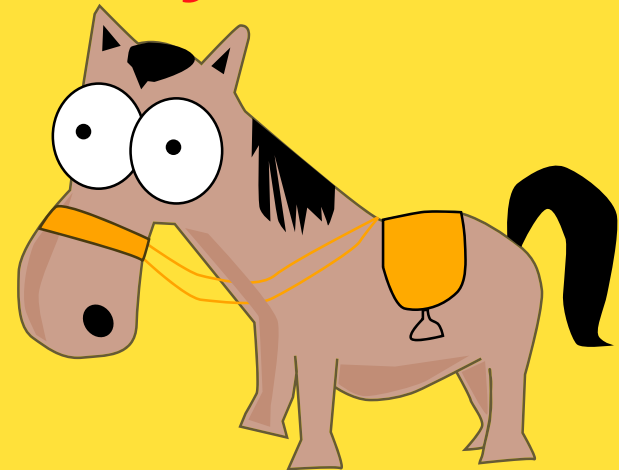
I watched a bus as it came up our road. The bus stopped and a man got out. The man had a case in his hand.



Indefinite Article A/An is used

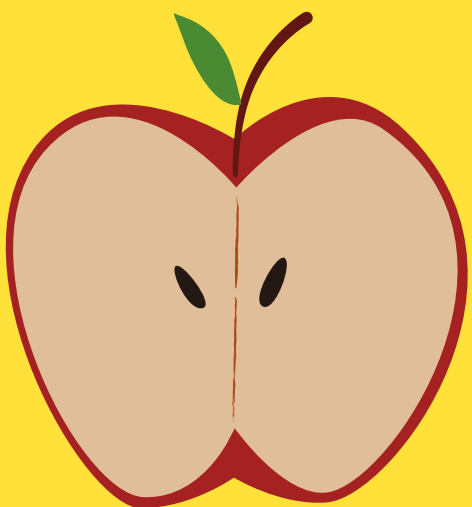
3 When the noun is used in a general sense and has the meaning "every" (mainly in definitions).

*A seamstress sews clothes.
A horse has four legs.*



4 When it preserves its old original meaning of "one":

a) with price, distance, frequency, measure, weight, time:



*Apples are 30 rubles a kilo.
I'll be back in a month.*

Indefinite Article A/An is used

b) in some set expressions:

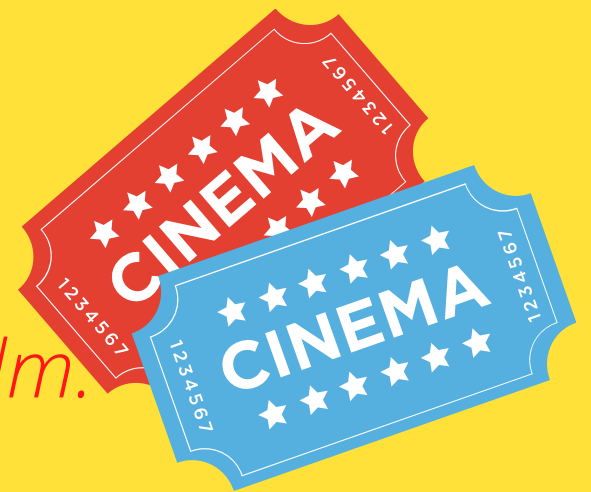
to be a success, to have a look (a try, a rest, a snack) to give a lift (a chance), to make a date (a will, a mistake, a speech, a start), to play a trick etc.

5 After the attributes such, rather, quite.

He is such a rich man.

She is quite a clever girl.

It was rather an interesting film.



Note! With uncountable nouns and nouns in plural no article is used. They were rather strange children.

Indefinite Article A/An is used

7 Before the subject in constructions

It is/was/will be...

There is/was/will be...

This is/was/will be....

It will be a good chance.

There's a black sheep in every flock.

This is a friend of mine.



8 Indefinite Article is used with names of substances

a) To denote a portion of food or drink

He ordered two ice-creams for kids and a coffee for himself.

Indefinite Article A/An is used

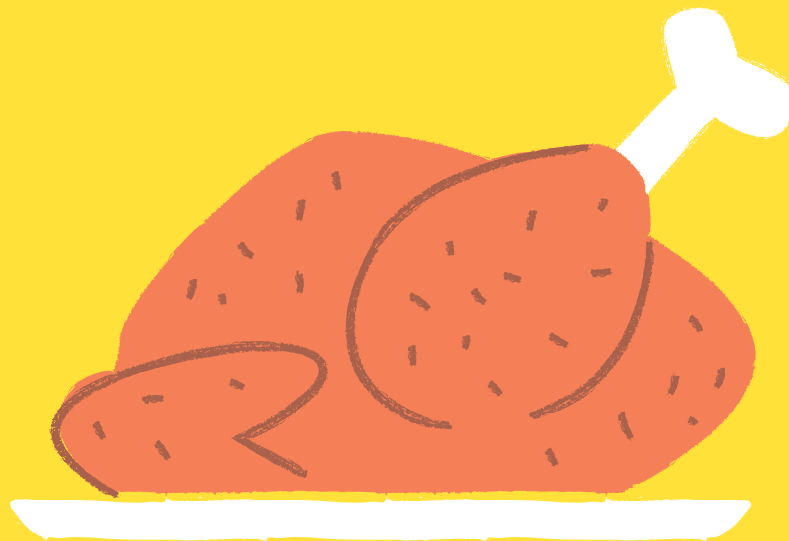
b) To denote an object made of a certain substance (with wood, paper, iron, glass, tin, cloth).

There was a glass of water on the table.



c) When such nouns as a duck, a lamb, a chicken, a fish, a turkey etc. denote flesh used for food.

We had cold chicken for dinner.



Indefinite Article A/An is used

9 Indefinite Article is used with abstract nouns

a) If a certain aspect of an abstract noun is meant.

*His face expressed a dramatic eagerness.
She had a grace which impressed her friends.*

b) When an abstract noun is modified by the adjectives certain or peculiar.

He felt a certain impatience.



Indefinite Article A/An is used

c) With the nouns pity, shame, disgrace, pleasure, relief, comfort, disappointment:

1) in construction with it as a subject

It's a relief I've passed the final exam.

2) in exclamatory sentences after what

What a disappointment!



Indefinite Article A/An is used

10 Indefinite Article with unique objects

a) is used when modified by descriptive attributes

This is a small world.



But! Nouns earth and weather are never used with the indefinite article.

b) in the idiom once in a blue moon

11 With names of seasons when they are modified by descriptive attributes

It is a rainy autumn.



Indefinite Article A/An is used

12 With names of parts of the day

a) When they are modified by descriptive attributes

After their quarrel Mary spent a sleepless night.

b) In the expression “for a day” which means for one day

I went to Moscow for a day.



13 With names of meals when they are modified by descriptive attributes

We started our trip after a substantial breakfast.

Indefinite Article A/An is used

14 Names of meals can be countable when they mean portions of food served at restaurants.



In this hotel you pay for a room and a breakfast.

15 Indefinite article with names of persons

a) When one member of the family is meant

He comes from the Benois, and like a Benois is very talented.



Indefinite Article A/An is used

b) When we indicate one resembling somebody

He is a real Romeo.



c) When they become countable and denote things associated with the certain persons

We have a Levitan at home.

d) When modified by the adjective certain

A certain Safonov is waiting for you.



Indefinite Article A/An is used

16 Indefinite article with geographic names is used with a descriptive attribute

It was a different Belgorod, unknown to him.



***But! Names of continents, countries, cities, villages are used without any article when modified by such attributes as:
north(ern), south(ern), east(ern), west(ern), ancient, old, central, medieval old England***



Definite Article The

The definite article “the” in grammar is a determiner that introduces or refers to **a specific noun**, or specifies the given noun.

Definite Article The is used

1 Before a noun when you mean something or somebody specific.

I'd like to speak to the manager. (You mean the manager of this shop).

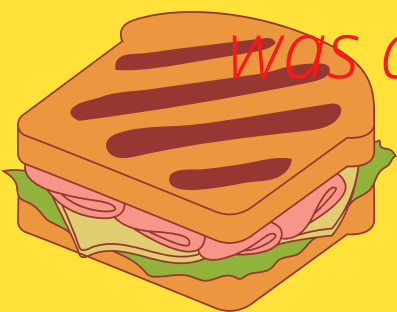
He spilled the juice all over the floor (here you mean some specific juice, perhaps the juice you needed for breakfast)

BUT: He spilled juice all over the floor (just juice).



2 Before a noun which has already been mentioned, i.e. the listener (or the reader) knows what exactly the speaker (or the writer) means.

I had a sandwich and an apple for breakfast. The sandwich was a bit stale, but the apple was sweet and juicy.



Definite Article The is used

3 Before a noun which describes a unique thing, object or title.

The moon goes round the earth, and the earth goes round the sun.

I like to look at the stars in the sky.

The internet has changed our life style.



BUT: We can use "Earth" without the (if we mean that it is a planet in space, like Mars, Venus etc.) and we can use space without the definite article.

Which planet is closest to Earth?

There are millions of stars in space.

Definite Article The is used

4 Before ordinal numbers: the first, the sixth, the eleventh...

John lives on the third floor.

5 With superlatives of adjectives.

The best person, the most important.

He is the finest young player.

6 In the expression "the same".

Your dress is the same colour as mine.

Are these cars the same?



Definite Article The is used

7 In some time expressions



in the past
in the present
in the future
in the morning
in the afternoon
in the evening
at the beginning
at the moment
for the time being
all the while

I am sorry, I can't speak to you at the moment.

We played tennis in the morning.



Definite Article The is used

8 In some place expressions.



at the top

at the end

in the middle

on the right/the left

in the north

in the south

in the west

in the east

The table is in the middle of the room.

*The most densely populated region in the south-west of
the United Kingdom.*

He lives in the north of Brazil.

BUT: He lives in northern Brazil (without the).

Definite Article The is used

9 For the nouns followed by "of-phrases" or by a descriptive subordinate clause



There are many interesting places in the countries of Central Europe.

*Ancient Greeks believed in the healing power of honey.
It is the man we saw yesterday!*

10 Before some public places (go to the cinema, the theatre, the bank, the post office, the station, the airport):

*I never go to the theatre but I often go to the cinema.
Are you going to the bank?*

BUT: Is there a bank near here? (doesn't matter which bank)

Definite Article The is used

11 Before the names of hotels, theatres, museums, cinemas, galleries, sights.

He will stay in the Sheraton. (hotel)

They visited the Kremlin.

I enjoyed my visit of the Guggenheim Museum.

Did you go up the Eiffel Tower?

12 In the phrases go to the doctor, the dentist.

I don't like going to the dentist.

She went to the doctor.



BUT: He works as a dentist (here his profession is meant)

Definite Article The is used

13 Before groups of people: nations, families.

The Chinese invented printing.

The Smiths live close to us.

14 Before a specific type of animal or machine.

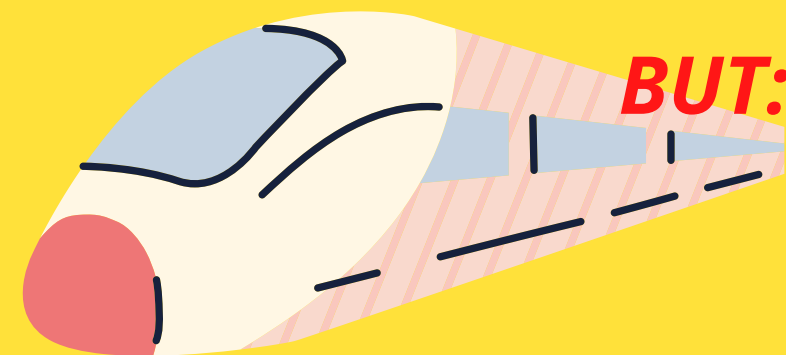
The giraffe is the tallest of all animals.



BUT: We saw a giraffe at the zoo (we mean one giraffe)

The bicycle is an excellent means of transport.

BUT: I go to work by bus.



Definite Article The is used

15 Before nouns which were made of adjectives



We must care about the old.

The state provides loans for the unemployed.

Do you think the rich should pay higher taxes?

Our government needs to do more to help the homeless.

16 Before musical instruments

Laura plays the flute and the piano.

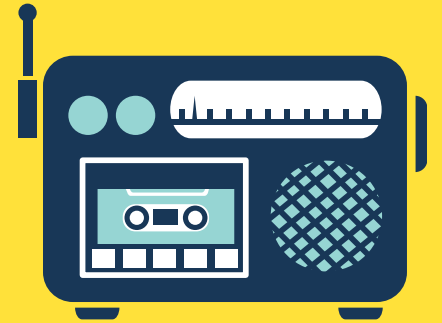
I want to learn how to play the guitar.



Definite Article The is used

17 Before "radio"

I listen to the radio a lot.



BUT: I watch television a lot (zero article).

18 Newspaper titles and books (The Independent, The Sunday Times)

I've read The Firm by John Grisham.

19 Canals, rivers, seas, oceans

The Suez Canal is an artificial waterway in Egypt.

The Thames is a river in England.

We visited the Mediterranean Sea.

Definite Article The is used

**20 Geographical areas (groups of countries) or
compass points**

*The Middle East, the Far East, the Asia, the West.
He travelled all over the Middle East.*



21 Forests

Have you been to the Black Forest?

22 Deserts (the Sahara , the Gobi desert)

I dream to see the Sahara some day.



Zero Article

In English grammar, the term zero article refers to an occasion in speech or writing where a noun or noun phrase ***is not preceded*** by an article (a, an, or the). The zero article is also known as the ***zero determiner***.

Zero Article is used

1 When we talk about things, ideas or people in general

I don't eat meat.

Life is not possible without oxygen.

I like writing letters.

I don't like cold weather.

I like classical music.



BUT: The film wasn't very interesting, but I liked the music (the speaker means the music in the film).

Children learn from playing.

BUT: We took the children to the zoo (the speaker means specific children)

Zero Article is used

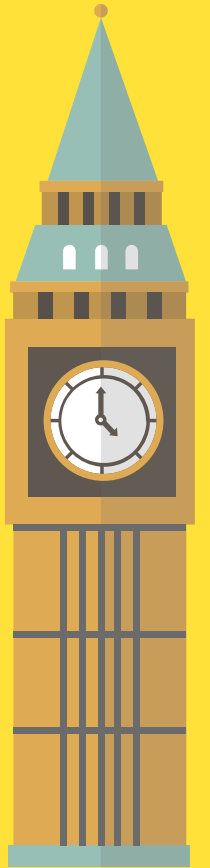
2 Before names of people

John Brown lived next door.

3 Before days of the week and months

We will stay in London till Wednesday.

He will come back in July.



4 Before times of the day and night (midday, midnight, noon)

I would like it finished by midday. Midnight came soon.



BUT: In the afternoon

Zero Article is used

5 Before meals (breakfast/ lunch/ dinner)

*What did you have for breakfast?
Dinner is ready!*



6 Before "home" and "work"

I am going home.

Are you going out tonight? - I am staying at home.

I'm going to work now.

What time do you usually finish work?



Zero Article is used

7 Before some official places (school, college, university, hospital, prison, church)

What did you learn at school?



BUT: Jane's mother went to the school to see her English teacher (we mean a specific building).

He wants to go to university.

Charles had an accident. He had to go to hospital.

David goes to church on Sundays.

John's friend is in prison for robbery.

BUT: John went to the prison to visit his friend (He is a visitor, not a prisoner).



Zero Article is used

**8 Before means of transport and communication
(by bus, by train, by car, by taxi, by plane, by
email, by phone)**

*Usually I go to work by bus.
I will contact you by email.*



9 Before next and last

*I am not working next Thursday.
I travelled to Greece last summer.*

10 Before phrases that consist of noun+number

*Our train leaves from Platform 11.
Do you have such shoes in size 42?*

Zero Article is used

11 Before sports and games

He played football and basketball.



12 Before academic subjects and languages

He studies mathematics, biology and physics.

Do you think English is difficult?

***BUT: I am interested in the history of my country
(of-phrase)***

13 Before names of companies and airlines

We visited the office of Fiat.

I often fly Singapore Airlines.

Zero Article is used

14 Before continents

Have you been to Africa or South America?

15 Before countries (except plural: the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and except republics: the Republic of Ireland, the Dominican Republic)



We stayed in Italy. She came back from Mexico.

16 Before names of cities, towns

London is the capital of the United Kingdom.

She lived in Paris.

Zero Article is used

17 Before names of streets and roads (except The High Street, The Strand)

Sherlock Holmes lived at Baker Street.

She lives at Green Road.

18 Before names of airports, stations, universities, castles

Welcome to Kennedy Airport!

Last summer we visited Edinburgh Castle.

He will apply to Cambridge University.



Zero Article is used

19 Before lakes (except groups of lakes like the Great Lakes)

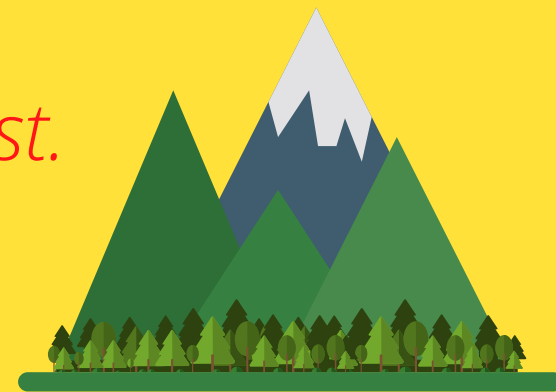
Lake Erie is located in Canada.

BUT: They live near the lake.

20 Before mountains (except mountain chains the Andes, the Rockies)

He dreamt to climb Mount Everest.

They liked Mount Fuji so much.



21 Before names of islands (except island chains: the Aleutians, the Canary Islands)

Last year he visited Easter Island. We want to go to Maui.

Exercises on Articles

1. Put in **a/an** or **the**.

1. We enjoyed our holiday. The hotel was very nice.
2. 'Can I ask a question?' 'Of course. What do you want to ask?'
3. You look very tired. You need _____ holiday.
4. 'Where's Tom?' 'He's in _____ bathroom.'
5. Jane is _____ interesting person You must meet her.
6. A: Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to _____ city centre?
B: Yes, go straight on and then take _____ next turning left.
7. A: Shall we go out for _____ meal this evening?
B: Yes, that's _____ nice idea.
8. Its' _____ nice morning. Let's go for _____ walk.
9. Amanda is _____ student. When she finishes her studies, she wants to be _____ journalist. She lives with two friends in _____ flat near _____ college where she is studying. _____ flat is small but she likes it.
10. Peter and Mary have got two children, _____ boy and _____ girl. _____ boy is seven years old and _____ girl is three. Mary works in _____ factory. Peter hasn't got _____ job at the moment.

2. Put in **a/an** or **the** where necessary.

1. Don't forget to turn off light when you go out. -----> turn off the light
2. Enjoy your holiday and don't forget to send me postcard. -----> _____
3. What is name of this village? -----> _____
4. Canada is very big country. -----> _____
5. What is largest city in Canada? -----> _____
6. I like this room but I don't like colour of carpet. -----> _____
7. 'Are you ok?' 'No, I've got headache.' -----> _____
8. We live in old house near station. -----> _____
9. What is name of director of film we saw last night? -----> _____

3. Put in **the** where necessary. Write *OK* if the sentence is already correct.

1. What is name of this street? -----> the name
2. What's on television tonight? -----> OK
3. Our apartment is on second floor. -----> _____
4. Would you like to go to moon? -----> _____
5. Which is best hotel in this town? -----> _____
6. What time is lunch? -----> _____
7. How far is it to city centre? -----> _____
8. We're going away at end of May. -----> _____
9. What are you doing next weekend? -----> _____
10. I didn't like her first time I met her. -----> _____

11. I'm going out after dinner. -----> _____
12. What's biggest city in world? -----> _____
13. My sister got married last month. -----> _____
14. My dictionary is on top shelf on right. -----> _____
15. We live in country, about five miles from nearest village. -----> _____

4. Complete these sentences. Choose from the list. Use **the** if necessary.

Capital dinner police lunch middle name sky television

1. We had dinner at a restaurant last night.
2. We stayed at a very nice hotel but I don't remember _____.
3. _____ is very clear tonight. You can see all the stars.
4. Did you see the film on _____ last night?
5. Somebody was trying to break into the shop so I called _____.
6. Tokyo is _____ of Japan.
7. 'What did you have for _____?' 'A salad.'
8. I woke up in _____ of the night.

(taken from Murphy, *Essential Grammar in Use* (CUP, 1997), p. 145&147)

Answer key:

Exercise 1

1. The
2. a
3. a
4. the
5. An
6. the; the
7. a; a
8. a; a
9. a; a; a; the; the
10. a; a; The; the; a; a

Exercise 3

1. the name
2. OK
3. on the second floor
4. to the moon
5. the best hotel
6. OK
7. the city centre
8. the end of May
9. OK
10. the first time
11. OK
12. the biggest city
13. OK
14. the top shelf on the right
15. the country,the nearest village

Exercise 2

1. turn off *the* light
2. send me *a* postcard
3. What is *the* name
4. *a* very big country.
5. *the* largest city
6. *the* colour of *the* carpet
7. I've got *a* headache.
8. in *an* old house near *the* station
9. *the* name of *the* director of *the* film

Exercise 4

1. dinner
2. the name
3. The sky
4. television
5. the police
6. the capital
7. dinner
8. the middle

(taken from Murphy, *Essential Grammar in Use* (CUP, 1997).