

ENGLISH

Articles (part 2)

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RULES FOR USING ARTICLES A-AN

1

'A' must be used before words which begin with a vowel symbol pronounced with the same sound as the 'y' or a 'w'-like sound

E.g. a euro, a unicycle, a university, etc.

2

Sometimes, 'an' is found before words beginning with the letter 'h'

E.g. an hour, an honor, an heir, etc.

3

We use 'an' before abbreviations that begin with a vowel sound.

E.g. an M.A., an M.Sc., an M.B.B.S., etc.

4

'A' or 'an' must be used before a singular noun standing for things that can be counted.

E.g. a chair, a bottle, an umbrella, etc.

5

'A' or 'an' must be used before the names of professions.

E.g. a director, an editor, a teacher, etc.

6

When you mean "a typical example", use "a" or "an."

E.g. A cat drinks milk.

7

Such + a/an + noun (or)
Such + a/an + adjective + noun (rare)

E.g. Such a policy, such a long trip, such a great teacher, etc.

8

The following word has an indefinite article.
so + adjective + a/an + noun.

E.g. So boring a book, So beautiful an actress, etc.

9

'Few' and 'Little' are negative in meaning. 'A few' and 'a little' are positive and mean 'some'.

E.g. He is young and has little experience of life.

10

In its original numerical sense of one.

E.g.
• Not a word was said.
• Twelve inches make a foot.

11

A, an = one thing or person.

E.g.
• She works in a hospital.
• I've got a puppy.

12

We use a/an when we say what a thing or a person is.

E.g.
• "Coca Cola" is a beverage.
• A dog is a domestic animal.

▪ How to Use Articles in English Grammar? (A, An ,The)

There are a variety of rules when it comes to using either a definite or an indefinite article.

Rule #1. We mentioned that depending on whether the noun begins with a consonant or a vowel will depend on which form of the indefinite article you will use, however like many times in the English language, there are some exceptions to this rule. The best example of this is with the word 'honour' which begins with a consonant; however, this letter is not pronounced so you would not use the word 'a' in this instance, you would say:

- It is **an** honour to meet the Queen.
- The same rule applies when a word begins with a vowel which is pronounced as though it were a consonant. An example of this would be:
- He is a United Nations representative.

Rule #2. If you are using a noun which has been modified by an adjective, then the article should come before the adjective and should correspond to the adjective rather than the noun. For example, the noun 'igloo' would usually take the article 'an' however if you wanted to describe it as being large, you would create a sentence as follows:

- The inuit people lived in **a** large igloo.

Another example of this would be if you were going to refer to the noun 'book' which would usually take the article 'a' however if you wanted to describe the book as being amazing, then you would create a sentence as follows:

- Last week I read **an** amazing book.

Rule #3. When you are using an uncountable noun (this is a noun which cannot be counted or is infinite or intangible. Some examples of these might be sand, soda, air, information etc) you should never use the indefinite article. The reason for this is that this form of article is only used for singular nouns. You may;however, use words such as some when talking about these uncountable nouns.

If you were to say the following sentence, it would not make any sense.

- Please give the dog a water.

Because the noun is uncountable, the use of the indefinite article does not sound correct, however if you were to use the definite article, this would not make sense either as you would be asking for a specific thing, consider the following sentence:

- Please give the dog the water.

Unless there is a specific bowl of water waiting to be given to the dog, this sentence would not be correct. If you wish to refer to an uncountable noun in this way, the correct sentence would be as follows:

- Please give the dog some water.

Rule #4. If you are using an article with a possessive pronoun, the rules change once again. In actual fact, the use of these two together does not make much sense.

- Have you got the my coat?

This is not correct as you cannot use an article with a possessive pronoun, therefore the article should be omitted.

Rule #5. Finally, there may be times where an article can be left out, as it is not necessary to refer to the noun. A good example of this would be the sentence 'I like to play football.' Whilst football is a noun, using the before it would be unnecessary and so the article is not included.

▪ When Not to Use an English Article

WHEN TO USE NO ARTICLE

1

- To talk about things in general
e.g. **Milk** is good for you.

2

- To talk about sports and games
e.g. Let's go and play **basketball**.



3

- Before the names of countries
e.g. Japan, France, Italy, etc. Except: the UK, the US, etc.

4

- Before the name of a language
e.g. We are learning **English**.



5

- Before the names of railway stations when they are also place names

6

- Before the names of meals
e.g. They invited some friends to **dinner**.

7

- Before **NOUN + NUMBER**
e.g. The laboratory is in **room 6** on the third floor.



▪ Articles with Countable and Uncountable Nouns

You need to categorize the noun as **count** or **noncount** to choose the correct article.

- Countable nouns are individual objects, people, places, etc. which can be counted.

Examples: *an apple, a school, 1 picture, 2 pictures, 3 pictures, 2 men, 4 men, 8 men.*

- Uncountable nouns are materials, concepts, information, etc. which are not individual objects and cannot be counted.

Examples: *information, water, understanding, wood, cheese.*

▪ How and when to use Articles with Uncountable Nouns.

1. We do not say a/an with an uncountable noun. For example:

water (NOT a water)
weather (NOT a weather)
music (NOT a music)

2. A number cannot be put in front of an uncountable noun. For example:

a piece of news (NOT 1 news)
two bottle of water (NOT 2 water)
a grain of rice (NOT 1 rice)

3. An uncountable noun is used with no article if we mean that thing *in general*. For example:

*He put **sugar** in his tea and stirred it.*
*He taught **music** at a school in Edinburgh.*

4. "The" is used with an uncountable noun when we are talking about a particular thing. For example:

*I immerse my clothes in **the water**.*
*She dissolved **the sugar** in the tea.*
*Did you like **the music** they played at the dance?*

