

Articles

What Is an Article?

- An article is a word that helps define a noun as specific or non-specific. In English, there are three articles: **a, an, and the**. **Examples:**
- This is **the book** that Dad said is a must-read. (specific)
- By using **the article** "the", we are showing that this is the exact same book that Dad keeps talking about as a great reading experience.
- This is **a book** I have heard a lot about. (not specific)
- The use of the article "a" in the sentence means that this is one of the many books the person has heard a lot about.

Types of Articles

- There are two types of articles: **the definite article** and **the indefinite article**.
- **The Definite Article**
- The definite article "**the**" is used to talk about one particular thing. **Example:**
- You may ask a friend, "Did you pass **the** test?"
- You are asking if your friend has passed the test that both of you are well aware of. In other words, this is something specific rather than general.
- We can also use **the** to refer to plural nouns, when they are being referenced specifically, as in:
 - "**The** dogs next door keep me awake with their barking."
 - "She's looking for **the** papers she printed last night."
 - "I see that **the** students have already arrived."

When Do We Use the Definite Article?

- to refer to **unique people** or objects. **Examples:**
- **The president** is expected to speak shortly.
- **The sun** rises in the east.
- with adjectives to refer to a whole group of people. **Examples:**
- **The rich** should help **the poor**.
- **The British** speak English.
- with rivers, deserts, mountain ranges, and oceans. **Examples:**
- We traveled across **the Nile**.
- Have you heard of **the Rocky Mountains**?
- **The Mojave Desert** is the driest desert in North America.

When Do We Use the Definite Article?

- with ordinal numbers when they denote a unique ordering. **Examples:**
- Veterans Day is the eleventh of November.
- Valentine's Day is the fourteenth of February.
- with the names of certain public institutions and most newspapers. **Examples:**
- I read the New York Times every day.
- Did you check the radio for the latest news?
- Mr. Mathews chose to stay at the Hilton Hotel.

- with the names of famous buildings, monuments, etc. **Examples:**

- Who doesn't like to visit **the Eiffel Tower**?

- **The Statue of Liberty** is an official national monument.

- with the names of families. **Examples:**

- **The Millers** are currently abroad.

- **The Smiths** are eating outside tonight.

- with countries that have plural names or names including the words "states", "kingdom", or "republic". **Examples:**

- Have you ever visited **the Netherlands**?

- April is from **the Philippines**.

- Kevin is from **the United States of America**.

The Indefinite Article

- There are two indefinite articles: **a** and **an**. The article "a" is used with words that start with a consonant sound, and the article "an" is used with words that have an initial vowel sound. The meaning of the indefinite article is that a noun is used to talk about a general thing and not a particular thing. Unlike **the**, a/an can only be used before singular nouns. **Example:**
- Your mom might ask, "Is there **a problem**?"
- She is not talking about a particular problem that she knows is bothering you. Instead, she is just wondering if there is anything that is worrying you, and you need help with.
- Indefinite articles are used only with singular nouns, while the definite article can be used with both singular and plural nouns. **Examples:**
- Can I have **a pen**, please? (indefinite article)
- I ate **an apple** for breakfast. (indefinite article)

Vowel Sounds vs. Consonant Sounds

- We use the indefinite article **a** when it precedes a word beginning with a consonant sound, and we use **an** when the article precedes a word beginning with a vowel sound. Note that this rule applies to the sound of the noun, rather than the specific spelling. For example:

✘ “What a **u**nusual discovery!” (incorrect)

✔ “What **an** unusual discovery!” (Correct—the word begins with the vowel “u,” and it makes the vowel sound “uh.”)

✘ “What **an u**nique discovery!” (incorrect)

✔ “What a unique discovery!” (Correct—the word begins with the vowel “u,” but it makes the consonant sound “**yu**.”)

✘ “It is a **h**onor to meet you.” (incorrect)

✔ “It is an **h**onor to meet you.” (Correct—the word begins with the consonant “h,” but it makes the vowel sound “ah.”)

Vowel Sounds vs. Consonant Sounds

- Here are a few other examples where a word's spelling goes against its pronunciation:
- an hour — makes the vowel sound “ow”
- an honest man — makes the vowel sound “awh”
- a university — makes the consonant sound “yu”
- a European citizen — makes the consonant sound “yu”
- a **o**nce-in-a-life-time chance — makes the consonant sound “wuh”

When Do We Use the Zero Article?

- **with the names of people. Examples:**
- Mathew is both intelligent and hardworking.
- Shakespeare is my favorite author.
- **with the names of days, months, and holidays. Examples:**
- School starts on Monday.
- Aunt Hilary will be coming home for Christmas.
- **with plural nouns used in a general context. Examples:**
- Cats are adorable.
- Few people work as hard as teachers.
- **with abstract nouns and uncountable nouns that are used in general. Examples:**
- Life in New York is not what it was a decade ago.
- We have run out of milk.
- Students should practice punctuality at all times.

When Do We Use the Zero Article?

- with words denoting unique jobs/professions. **Examples:**
 - Abraham Lincoln became **president** in 1861.
 - Donald was elected **chairman** after the death of Benjamin.
- with the names of restaurants ending in s. **Example:**
 - We were dining at **Smith's** when you called.
- with the names of lakes, continents, and mountains. **Examples:**
 - We have seen **Lake Rabun**.
 - **Lake Erie** is one of the five great lakes in North America.
 - **Asia** is the largest continent in the world.
 - Have you visited **Mount Rushmore**?
- with the names of meals. **Examples:**
 - Dad has **breakfast** at 8 o'clock.
 - Who will prepare **dinner** today?
- with certain prepositional phrases. **Examples:**
 - The teacher has asked us to learn the poem **by heart**.

When Do We Use the Zero Article?

- **with the names of sports. Examples:**

- My brothers play football very well.

- I practice soccer every morning.

- **with certain nouns that are only one of their kind. Example:**

- Heaven and hell are the two important themes of the book.

- **with the names of streets, roads, avenues, etc. There are some exceptions though. Examples:**

- Dad's office is on Bloor Street.

- Maria lives on Summerside Avenue.

- **with certain nouns when referring to their primary purpose. Examples:**

- Allen didn't go to school today.

- Daniel is due to appear in court again on Tuesday.

- Rose stayed in bed until 9 o'clock.