

Definite and Indefinite Articles



There are 3 possibilities to use articles in English:

- ✚ The indefinite article “a” or “an”
- ✚ The definite article “the”
- ✚ No article at all

Singular count nouns: Nouns that can be counted and have a plural form, example: an apple, a student.

Plural count nouns: nouns in their plural form, example: bananas, pens.

Non-count nouns: collective nouns, example: furniture, family.

➤ Indefinite Articles—**a, an**

an—used before singular count nouns beginning with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) or vowel sound:

- an apple, an elephant, an issue, an orange

a—used before singular count nouns beginning with consonants (other than a, e, i, o, u):

- a stamp, a desk, a TV, a cup, a book

Used before singular nouns that are unspecified:

- a pencil
- an orange



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Used before number collectives and some numbers:

- a dozen
- a gallon

Used before a singular noun followed by a restrictive modifier:

- a girl who was wearing a yellow hat that day was Lucy.

Used with nouns to form adverbial phrases of quantity, amount, or degree:

- I felt a bit depressed.

➤ **Definite Article—the**

Can be used before singular and plural, count and non-count nouns

Used to indicate a noun that is definite or has been previously specified in the context:

- Please close the door.
- I like the clothes you gave me.

Used to indicate a noun that is unique:

- Praise the Lord!
- The Columbia River is near here.

Used to designate a natural phenomenon:

- The nights get shorter in the summer.
- The wind is blowing so hard.

Used to refer to a time period:

- I was very naïve in the past.
- This song was very popular in the 1980s.

Used to indicate all the members of a family:

- I invited the Bakers for dinner.
- The Smiths invented this medicine.

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References - The following works were used during the creation of this handout: [*Indefinite and Definite Articles*](#).



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