

Definite and Indefinite articles

What is an article?

Basically, **articles** are either *definite* or *indefinite*. They combine to a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun.

- The **definite** article is **the**.
- The **indefinite** article is **a / an**.

The indefinite article *a* or *an*:

The article **a / an** is used when we don't specify the things or people we are talking about:

- I met **a** friend.
- I work in **a** factory in New York.
- I borrowed **a** pencil from **a** passenger sitting next to me.

The indefinite article **a** is used before a consonant sound:

- **a** dog.
- **a** pilot
- **a** teacher.
- **a** university

NOTE:

Although 'university' starts with the vowel 'u', it is not pronounced as such. It is pronounced as a consonant sound /ju:.niv3:..si.ti/

The indefinite article **an** is used before a vowel sound:

- **an** engineer.
- **an** elephant.
- **an** athlete

The definite article *the*:

It's used when the speaker talks about a specific object that both the person speaking and the listener know.

- **The** car over there is fast.
- **The** president of the United States is giving a speech tonight.

When we speak of something or someone for the first time we use **a** or **an**, the next time we repeat that object we use the definite article **the**.

- I live in **a** house. **The** house is quite old and has four bedrooms.
- I ate in **a** Chinese restaurant. **The** restaurant was very good.

No article:

1. Do not use an article with countries, states, counties or provinces, lakes and mountains except when the country is a collection of states such as "**The** United States".

- He lives in **Washington** near **Mount Rainier**.
- They live in **Northern British Columbia**.
- They climbed **Mount Everest**.

2. we do not normally use an article with plurals and uncountable nouns to talk about things in general.:

- He writes books.
- She likes sweets.
- Do you like jazz music?
- She ate bread with butter in the morning.

Countable and uncountable nouns

Using English articles with countable and uncountable nouns may be confusing.

The can be used with *uncountable* nouns, or the article can be dropped entirely as mentioned above.

1. "The two countries reached **the** peace after a long disastrous war" (some specific peace treaty) or "The two countries reached peace after a long disastrous war" (any peace).
2. "He drank **the** water" (some specific water- for example, the water his wife brought him from the kitchen) or "He drank water." (any water)

It is unusual to use **a/an** for uncountable nouns. You can't say "~~I'd like a milk~~"

a/an can be used only with *countable* nouns.

1. I'd like **a** piece of cake.
2. I lent him **a** book.
3. I drank **a** cup of tea.

exercices :

Choose the correct definite or indefinite article: "the", "a", "an" or "x" (zero article) .

1. I bought (...) pair of shoes.
2. I saw (...) movie last night.
3. They are staying at (...) hotel.
4. I think (...)man over there is very unfriendly.
5. I do not like (...) basketball.
6. That is (...) problem I told you about.
7. The(...) night is quiet. Let's take a walk!
8. The(...) price of gas keeps rising.
9. John traveled to (...)Mexico.
10. Juan is (...)Spanish.
11. I read (...)amazing story yesterday.
12. My brother does not eat (...) chicken.
13. (...)love is such (...) beautiful thing.
14. I live in (...) apartment. (...)apartment is new.
15. I would like (...) piece of cake.
16. I was in (...) Japanese restaurant. (...) restaurant served good food.
17. Sara can play (...)guitar.

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