

Articles

There are three articles:

indefinite articles — a, an

the definite article — the

A, an

1. *A* and *an* are indefinite articles. They suggest *one*. So they are used *before countable nouns in the singular number*:

a bird	an animal
a parrot	an eagle

2. *a + consonant sound*

We use *a* before a word beginning with *a consonant sound*:

a shop	a train	a ball
a university		a European
↑		↑
(yoo - consonant sound)		(yoo - consonant sound)
a one-act play		a one-rupee note
↑		↑
(w- consonant sound)		(w- consonant sound)

3. *an + vowel sound*

We use *an* before a word beginning with *a vowel sound*:

an apple	an eye	an uncle
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4. (a) Words beginning with *silent h* take *an* before them:

an hour	an honour	an honest person
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(b) The *h* in *hotel, historical, habitual, humble* is not silent. So we use *a* before them:

a hotel	a historical novel	a humble beginning
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5. *an + abbreviations*

Since abbreviations like M.P., M.B.A., begin with *a vowel sound* (*m* pronounced as *em*), we use *an* before them:

an M.P.	an N.C.C. officer
But a B.Ed.	a Ph.D.

6. *a/an + noun (to denote a class)*

A/an is used before *a singular countable noun* when it represents *a class*:

A whale is a mammal. (every whale)

An octopus is a sea animal. (every octopus)

Here *a/an* = all/every.

7. *a/an + noun (profession, post, nationality, religion, etc.)*

a doctor	an Indian	a Hindu
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8. *a/an + noun (degree, title, etc.)*

an M.Ed.	a Padmashri
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9. *a/an + noun* (rate, etc.)

twenty rupees a dozen ₹ 500 a month Eighty miles an hour

10. *a/an + verb-noun* (verb used as a noun)

She is going for a walk.

He is having a bath.

11. *a/an + adjective + noun*

If there is an adjective before a noun, *a/an* is placed *before the adjective*. The choice of *a/an* depends upon the sound with which the adjective begins:

an artist

a great artist

an experienced artist

12. *a/an in phrases*

Note the use of *a/an* in the following phrases:

a pity

a shame

a pleasure

a noise

a rage

a nuisance

a headache

a bad cold

in a whisper

in a low voice

to be at a loss

to be in a hurry

to have a good time

to run a temperature

to be in a temper

to have a slight fever

? Exercise 1. Fill in the blanks with *a* or *an* where necessary:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. heir | 2. accounts assistant |
| 3. hot tea | 4. hot cup of tea |
| 5. unit | 6. European country |
| 7. unusual event | 8. humble person |
| 9. Bharat Ratna | 10. eucalyptus tree |
| 11. airy room | 12. in hurry |
| 13. paper | 14. sheet of paper |
| 15. eventful year | 16. historic event |
| 17. useful invention | 18. fifty rupees..... litre |
| 19. university college | 20. L-shaped sofa set |

The Definite Article – *the*

The is the definite article.

► *The* is pronounced as di: before a vowel sound and as δ before a consonant sound.

We use *the* in the following situations.

1. Before a noun whenever we want to *particularise that noun*:

the books lying on my table

the shoes I bought last evening

2. When a noun is mentioned *for the first time*, we use *a* or *an* before it (for it could be *any*), but when it is mentioned *again*, we use *the* (for it has now become *particular*):

Gaurav presented me a book. (*any* book)
The book contains several interesting stories. (*the* book presented by Gaurav)

3. When it is clear from the situation which people or thing we mean:

Would you please switch on **the** fan? (the fan in the room)
The teacher said my poem was really good. (**the** teacher = our teacher)

4. With such phrases as immediately *single out* or *specify* a person or object:

the first day **the** last bench **the** main problem
the next child **the** only daughter **the** same book

5. With *adjectives in the superlative degree*:

the fastest animal
the most hardworking student in our class

6. With *adjectives in the comparative degree* in the kind of sentence given below:

He is **the** more experienced of the two candidates.

7. Before a *noun* considered to be *unique* or *extraordinary* (**the** = the best, the only):

This is **the** book you need. (*the* only book, *the* best book)
He is **the** man for your office. (*the* best man)

8. When there is *only one* of something (These nouns do not begin with a capital letter.):

the sun **the** moon **the** equator
the sky **the** earth

9. Before the name of a person or thing whose *identity* is known to everyone:

the Prime Minister **the** Principal

10. Before a *common noun* when that noun represents *the whole class*:

The dog is a faithful animal.
The camel is the ship of the desert.

11. Before an *adjective* or a *participle* to represent a *class of people*:

Law does not discriminate between **the** rich and **the** poor.
There was nobody to look after **the** wounded and **the** dying.

12. Before the names of

- the ranges of mountains and hills **the** Alps, **the** Khasi Hills
- groups of islands **the** Andamans, **the** West Indies
- rivers **the** Thames, **the** Sutlej
- gulfs, canals, seas, oceans **the** Persian Gulf, **the** Pacific Ocean
- well-known buildings **the** Gateway of India, **the** Lotus Temple
- holy books **the** Bible, **the** Gita
- newspapers **the** Hindu, **the** Washington Post

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- trains, ships, aeroplanes
- cardinal directions
- inventions
- countries if the name contains a common noun
- the whole families

the Shatabdi Express, the Ashoka
the east, the south
the microscope, the computer
the United States of America,
the United Kingdom
(states, kingdom – common nouns)
the Bachchans, the Khans

Note. We do not use *the* before the names of individual peaks, individual islands and magazines:

the Sri Lanka × the Mt. Everest × the India Today ×

13. Before *common nouns* that name *musical instruments*:

She is playing **the** sitar.

My sister accompanied me on **the** violin.

14. We go to *the cinema, the theatre*. We usually say *the radio* but *television* (without *the*):

My grandparents rarely go to **the** cinema.

She is watching television. (**the** television ×)

15. Note the use of *the* in the following:

The more, **the** merrier.

The nearer the church, **the** farther from God.

Oranges are sold by **the** dozen.

Petrol is sold by **the** litre.

16. We use *the* in the following expressions:

on **the** one hand

on **the** other hand

to speak **the** truth

to read in **the** original.

Articles with Proper Nouns

Generally no article is used before a *proper noun*. So no article is used before the names of

- people
- countries and continents
- cities and states
- days, months, seasons and festivals
- languages
- subjects of study

the Ankita Raina ×
the India, the China ×
the Asia, the Europe ×
the Nainital, the Chhattisgarh ×
the Sunday, the August ×
the winter, the Christmas ×
the Japanese, the English ×
the Geography, the Economics ×

However, if a *proper noun* is used like a *common noun*, we can use *a*, *an* or *the* with it:

Sanjay is a good batsman but he is not a Sachin.

(a player of Sachin's calibre)

Sanjay is **the** Sachin of our school.

(the player having Sachin's ability)

Where Not to Use Any Article

We normally do not use any articles

1. with nouns that name *materials*:

Water is going to be scarce. (the water X)

This table is made of **teak**. (the teak X)

2. with *abstract nouns*:

Honesty is a great virtue. (the honesty X)

We must cultivate **love** and **compassion** for all. (the love X)

3. when a noun is used in the *general sense*:

Man is a social animal. (We are talking of man in the general sense.)

4. with *plural nouns* when they denote a *class*:

Saints believe in simple living and high thinking.

Children usually live in the present moment.

5. with the *names of meals* — dinner, lunch, breakfast:

What do you normally eat for **breakfast**?

Lunch is served between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

6. with the *names of diseases*:

Tuberculosis is no longer an incurable disease.

7. with words like *father, mother, uncle*, because, in a given situation, they are just like a proper noun:

Mother wants to send me abroad for higher studies.

Father has been transferred to Kolkata.

8. in headlines and telegrams (where the number of words matters):

P.M. addresses several election rallies.

Come for **interview** 10 a.m., 15 July.

9. Very often, the use or the omission of the article changes the meaning:

Very few poor parents send their children to **school**.

(to school = to study)

My father went to **the school** to deposit my fees.

(the school = the building in which the school is run)

Words like *prison, hospital, church, court, temple, college* are also used in the same way.

10. with several *phrasal verbs*:

to go to bed

to take part in

to lose heart

to take to task

to shake hands

to go home

to take care of

to be in debt

to catch fire

to take offence

to take place

to take heart

to be at fault

to send word

to make use of



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11. with these phrases:

- by bus/car/air
- by mistake
- at hand

- by hand
- in case
- at last

- on foot/duty/strike
- in trouble
- at night

12. with these phrases:

hand in hand

from dawn to dusk

from right to left

The Repetition of Articles

The repetition of an article changes the meaning:

I can see **a white and a black** cow grazing in the field.
(two cows — one white and the other black)

I can see **a white and black** cow grazing in the field.
(only one cow, which is white and black)

I could not contact **the director and the producer** of the play.
(two persons — one director and the other producer)

I could not contact **the director and producer** of the play.
(only one person)

? Exercise 2. Fill in the blanks with a, an or the where necessary:

- About half hour later, I saw old lady walking towards house. She paused for while at gate. Then she rang door bell.
- I am eagerly waiting for one-day international between India and Sri Lanka. two teams are evenly matched and it promises to be exciting match.
- Even Gandhi would find it difficult to pull country out of present mess.
- lady who lives in neighbouring house is architect by profession. She is Australian married to European. two are leading quite contented life.
- If you are privileged child, you must learn to share good things of life you have with poor and deprived. You must learn to give, for more you give, better you feel.
- History Club of school is organising tour of historical places in and around Agra in beginning of autumn break.
- Why are you in hurry? Why don't you stay for some more days and enjoy scenic beauty of snow-clad peaks of Himalayas?
- team of two Indian mountaineers succeeded in reaching top of Mt. Everest, highest peak in world. whole nation applauded feat.
- I am young boy from island to east of this place. About week ago, I set out fishing in sail boat but got caught in storm. boat sank but I managed to swim ashore.
- Managing Director was busy in urgent meeting with M.P. from Maharashtra. I had to wait for hour and half before I could meet him and discuss with him problem I am facing.