

Articles

The articles—*a*, *an*, *the*—are discussed below. The indefinite articles—*a*, *an*—mean “one” and so they can be used only before singular, countable nouns. Neither is used for plurals or noncount nouns when making a generalization.

The article *a* is used before consonants; *an* is used before vowels.

- Be careful with the vowel *u* when pronounced “yu” (as in *university*). In that circumstance, *a* is used.
- Be careful with the consonant *h*. When it is silent, *an* is used.

The chart below summarizes the information.

11-1 A vs. AN	
(a) I have a pencil. (b) I live in an apartment. (c) I have a small apartment. (d) I live in an old building.	A and an are used in front of a singular noun (e.g., <i>pencil</i> , <i>apartment</i>). They mean “one.” If a singular noun is modified by an adjective (e.g., <i>small</i> , <i>old</i>), a or an comes in front of the adjective, as in (c) and (d). A is used in front of words that begin with a consonant (<i>b</i> , <i>c</i> , <i>d</i> , <i>f</i> , <i>g</i> , etc.): <i>a</i> boy, <i>a</i> bad day, <i>a</i> cat, <i>a</i> cute baby. An is used in front of words that begin with the vowels a , e , i , and o : <i>an</i> apartment, <i>an</i> angry man, <i>an</i> elephant, <i>an</i> empty room, etc.
(e) I have an umbrella. (f) I saw an ugly picture. (g) I attend a university. (h) I had a unique experience.	For words that begin with the letter u : (1) An is used if the u is a vowel sound, as in <i>an</i> umbrella, <i>an</i> uncle, <i>an</i> unusual day. (2) A is used if the u is a consonant sound, as in <i>a</i> university, <i>a</i> unit, <i>a</i> usual event.
(i) He will arrive in an hour. (j) New Year’s Day is a holiday.	For words that begin with the letter h : (1) An is used if the h is silent: <i>an</i> hour, <i>an</i> honor, <i>an</i> honest person. (2) A is used if the h is pronounced: <i>a</i> holiday, <i>a</i> hotel, <i>a</i> high point.

Write *a* or *an* in the blanks.

Directions: Write *a* or *an* in the blanks.

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>a</u> mistake | 7. _____ uniform | 13. _____ hour or two |
| 2. _____ abbreviation | 8. _____ union | 14. _____ hole in the ground |
| 3. _____ dream | 9. _____ untrue story | 15. _____ hill |
| 4. _____ interesting dream | 10. _____ urgent message | 16. _____ handsome man |
| 5. _____ empty box | 11. _____ universal problem | 17. _____ honest man |
| 6. _____ box | 12. _____ unhappy child | 18. _____ honor |

The indefinite articles point to unspecified items; the definite article (discussed on the following page) points to a specific item.

There is only one definite article in English—*the*. It can be used with both singular and plural, countable and uncountable nouns. The chart indicates when it is not used.

11-9 USING <i>THE</i> OR Ø WITH NAMES	
(a) We met Ø <i>Mr. Wang</i> . I know Ø <i>Doctor Smith</i> . Ø <i>President Rice</i> has been in the news.	<i>The</i> is NOT used with titled names. <i>INCORRECT: We met the Mr. Wang.</i>
(b) He lives in Ø <i>Europe</i> . Ø <i>Asia</i> is the largest continent. Have you ever been in Ø <i>Africa</i> ?	<i>The</i> is NOT used with the names of continents. <i>INCORRECT: He lives in the Europe.</i>
(c) He lives in Ø <i>France</i> . Ø <i>Brazil</i> is a large country. Have you ever been in Ø <i>Thailand</i> ?	<i>The</i> is NOT used with the names of most countries. <i>INCORRECT: He lives in the France.</i>
(d) He lives in <i>the</i> <i>United States</i> . <i>The Netherlands</i> is in Europe. Have you ever been in <i>the</i> <i>Philippines</i> ?	<i>The</i> is used in the names of only a few countries, as in the examples. Others: <i>the Czech Republic, the United Arab Emirates, the Dominican Republic.</i>
(e) He lives in Ø <i>Paris</i> . Ø <i>New York</i> is the largest city in the United States. Have you ever been in Ø <i>Istanbul</i> ?	<i>The</i> is NOT used with the names of cities. <i>INCORRECT: He lives in the Paris.</i>
(f) <i>The Nile River</i> is long. They crossed <i>the Pacific Ocean</i> . <i>The Yellow Sea</i> is in Asia.	<i>The</i> is used with the names of rivers, oceans, and seas.
(g) Chicago is on Ø <i>Lake Michigan</i> . Ø <i>Lake Titicaca</i> lies on the border between Peru and Bolivia.	<i>The</i> is NOT used with the names of lakes.
(h) We hiked in <i>the Alps</i> . <i>The Andes</i> are in South America.	<i>The</i> is used with the names of mountain ranges.
(i) He climbed Ø <i>Mount Everest</i> . Ø <i>Mount Fuji</i> is in Japan.	<i>The</i> is NOT used with the names of individual mountains.

Decide which article—*a*, *an*, *the*—would correctly complete the sentences.

6. Yesterday I saw _____ dog and _____ cat. _____ dog was chasing _____ cat. _____ cat was chasing _____ mouse. _____ mouse ran into _____ hole, but _____ hole was very small. _____ cat couldn't get into _____ hole, so it ran up _____ tree. _____ dog tried to climb _____ tree too, but it couldn't.

In this exercise, fill the blank with a, an, the, or Ø if no article should be used.

1. I have a window in my bedroom. I keep it open at night because I like Ø fresh air. The window is above my bed.
2. Kathy bought _____ radio. She likes to listen to _____ music when she studies.
3. A: Would you please turn _____ radio down? _____ music is too loud.
B: No problem.
4. _____ good book is _____ friend for _____ life.
5. Last week I read _____ book about _____ life of Gandhi.
6. A: Let's go swimming in _____ lake today.
B: That sounds like _____ good idea.
7. _____ lake is a body of _____ water that is smaller than _____ sea but larger than _____ pond. _____ ocean is larger than _____ sea.
8. During our vacation in Brazil, we walked along _____ beach in front of our hotel and looked at _____ ocean.
9. _____ water is essential to human life, but don't drink _____ water in the Flat River. It'll kill you! _____ pollution in that river is terrible.
10. People can drink _____ fresh water. They can't drink _____ seawater because it contains _____ salt.
11. Ted, pass _____ salt, please. And _____ pepper. Thanks.
12. _____ different countries have _____ different geography. Italy is located on _____ peninsula. Japan is _____ island nation.
13. A: How did you get here? Did you walk?
B: No, I took _____ taxi.
14. There are some wonderful small markets in my neighborhood. You can always get _____ fresh fish at Mr. Rico's fish market.
15. _____ good food keeps us healthy and adds _____ pleasure to our lives.

16. A: Well, are you ready to leave?

B: Anytime you are.

A: Let me take just one last sip of coffee. I've really enjoyed this meal.

B: I agree. _____ food was excellent—especially _____ fish. And _____ service was exceptionally good. Let's leave _____ waitress _____ good tip.

A: Yes, let's do that. I usually tip around fifteen percent, sometimes eighteen percent. Does that sound about right to you?

17. A: We're ready to go, kids. Get in _____ car.

B: Just a minute! We forgot something.

A: Marge, can you get _____ kids in _____ car, please?

B: Just a minute, Harry. They're coming.

In the final exercise, indicate if you need *the* or \emptyset no article.

I would like to know more about . . .

1. the Amazon River.

2. \emptyset Korea.

3. _____ Mexico City.

4. _____ Indian Ocean.

5. _____ Ural Mountains.

6. _____ Australia.

7. _____ Mississippi River.

8. _____ Red Sea.

9. _____ Lake Michigan.

10. _____ Mount Fuji.