

# Articles

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## **Indefinite articles**

A or an, points out at any (not particular) person or thing. They leave indefinite the person or thing spoken of. They are known as the indefinite articles. For example:  
An orange is a fruit. An umbrella is a useful thing.

## **Use of 'a' or 'an'**

### **We know that:**

- A is used before a word beginning with a consonant sound; as: a book, a cat, a doll, a fan, a girl, a hat, a jug, a kite, a lion, a man, a pen, a queen, a rat, a swan, a tiger, a van, a watch, a xylophone, a yak, a zebra.
- An is used before a word beginning with a vowel sound; as: an apple, an elephant, an inkpot, an orange, an umbrella. But we use a university, a ewe, a unicorn, a European, a union, a one rupee.

## **More to know about articles**

A one-eyed man, a useful thing, because these words begin with a consonant sound though their spellings begin with vowels. We also use an hour, an honest man, an heir, an MA, an MBA, an X-mas tree, an S.C., an S.T., an F.I.R. because these words begin with a vowel sound though their spellings begin with 'h' or 'm' or 'x' or 's' or 'f' which are consonants.

## **Definite Article: The**

"The" points out at some particular person or thing. It is known as the Definite Article. The Rama, The Ganga, The Himalaya etc.

## **Indefinite Article: a, an**

When we speak of a person or a thing for the first time, we generally use the indefinite article, a or an; but when we speak of the same person or thing a second time, we use the definite article the; as:

A boy once followed a path through a forest and came across a bridge over a river. He crossed the bridge over the river and left behind the path through the forest.

## **Use of "the"**

### **"The" is used before the following:**

- A particular noun  
Is this the pen you are looking for?  
(Ques: Which pen? Ans: The particular one you are looking for.)

- A noun when it is only one of something or is unique of its kind  
The sun, the moon, the earth, the sky, the ocean, the river, the sea.
- The superlatives  
The richest, the strongest, the coldest, the longest, the smallest, the best.
- The noun that represents the whole class
  - (i) The lion is the king of the animals.
  - (ii) The peacock is our national bird.
  - (iii) The tiger is our national animal.
  - (iv) The lotus is our national flower.
  - (v) The horse is a noble animal.
- The numerical positions  
The first, the last, the second, the next, the third, the fourth, the middle, the second last, the thousandth, etc.
- We mostly do not use an article before proper nouns, but a few Proper nouns are preceded by the definite article 'the'; as  
The names of oceans, seas, rivers, mountain ranges, deserts, canals, groups of islands, books, trains, ships and monuments:  
The Himalayas, the Alps, the Vindhyas, the Andes, the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, the Ganga, the Thames, the Times of India, the Taj Mahal, the Arabian Sea, the Suez Canal, the Sahara, the Thar, the Andamans, the West Indies, the East Indies, the Rajdhani Express, the Vedas, the Geeta, the Ramayana.
- The name of a very few countries which include words like republic, united and kingdom:  
The United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Irish Republic, the United Arab Emirates also the Netherlands, The Hague, the Lebanon, the Congo. The name of a few places; as:  
The Deccan, the Rann of Kutch, the Sudan, the Punjab, the Saar, the Transvaal, the Saar, the Carnatic.

**Note:** As a general rule, we use "the" when it is clear from the context which person or thing we mean; we use a, an when it is not clear which person or thing we mean.

### **Omission of the Article:**

**Articles are not used before the following:**

- Common Nouns in the plural number
  - (i) Cows give us milk; not, the cows give us milk.

- (ii) Bullocks draw carts; not, the bullocks draw carts.
- (iii) Birds live in trees; not, the birds live in trees.

- Proper Nouns

- Names of Countries:**

- (i) India is my country; not, The India is my country.
  - (ii) China is the biggest country; not, The China is the biggest country.

- Names of Persons

- (i) Samita is my best friend; not, The Samita is my best friend.
  - (ii) Mahatma Gandhi is the father of the nation; not, The Mahatma Gandhi is the father of the nation.

- Names of Days of the week and months

- (i) Sunday is the first day of the week; not, The Sunday is the first day of the week.
  - (ii) December is the last month of the year; not, The December is the last month of the year.

- Names of mountain peaks

- (i) Sunset in Mount Abu is worth seeing; not Sunset in the Mount Abu is worth seeing.
  - (ii) Mount Everest is the highest mountain peak in the world; not, The Mount Everest is the highest mountain peak of the world.

- Names of individual islands

- Java, Sumatra, Tasmania, New Zealand.

- Names of materials

- (i) She wears neither gold nor silver; not, she wears neither the gold nor the silver.
  - (ii) We wear clothes made of cotton, silk and wool; not, we wear clothes made of the cotton, the silk and the wool.

- Abstract Nouns

- (i) Heath is wealth; not, the health is the wealth.
  - (ii) Beauty is not skin deep; not, the beauty is not skin deep.
  - (iii) Honesty is the best policy; not, the honesty is the best policy.

## **Q. What is an article**

A, An and The, are called Articles. The articles are generally used to point out people or things. They are used before a noun.

**Examples:**

**(i)** An orange is a fruit.

**(ii)** An umbrella is a useful thing.