



ENGLISH GRAMMAR (ARTICLE)

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Articles

As we know that anything that describes something, (mostly noun or pronoun) is an adjective. So articles too, are adjectives because they add a meaning to the words they are describing. Articles are small words but they should be used carefully because their wrong usage can cause grammatical errors. For example, you wanted someone to hand you **the** book but you accidentally said **a** book, the other person might take some time out to go and buy some book which he thought you would like. Use of article can also change the meaning of noun.

For example:

Lunch = the afternoon meal.

A lunch = an afternoon meal held for some kind of event.

The dinner = a specific afternoon meal which was held for some kind of event.



Types of articles

- (1) Indefinite article [A, An]
- (2) Definite article [The]

Indefinite Article

“A” is used before singular count nouns beginning with a consonant (other than a – e – i – o – u) or a consonant sound. “An” is used with before the singular count nouns beginning with a vowel (a – e – i – o – u) or a vowel sound. For example: *I have a friend, he has an apple.* So we can understand that using articles is a matter of sounds. Such as: *an MP Officer, an L-shaped building, an SMS, an hour and a university.*

Note: When a vowel begins with a consonant sound, use “A”. Similarly, when a consonant begins with a vowel sound, use “An”.

When to use indefinite articles? We use indefinite article

- (1) Before a countable noun which is mentioned for the first time and refers to no specific person or thing: *He lives in a cave, we bought an orange, I need a friend.*



- (2) Before a singular countable noun which is used as an example: *a man should work hard to be successful* (All men/any man should). *A child needs love* (all children/any child).
- (3) With a noun complement: *it is a soldier, it was an earthquake, he is a doctor, she is an actress.*
- (4) When we refer to quantity: *a lot of, a couple, a great many, a dozen, a great deal of.*
- (5) With certain numbers: *A hundred, a thousand.*
- (6) Before “**half**”: one and a half kilos or a kilo and a half. **Half + noun** is also possible: *a half-holiday, a half portion, a half-share, a third, a quarter.*
- (7) When we express price, ratio or speed of something: *4 times a day, 60 kilometers an hour.* In such cases, **A/An** is used as “**per**”.
- (8) In exclamation before singular nouns: *Such a long queue! What a pretty girl!* Before plural nouns, no articles are required: *Such long queues! What pretty girls!*



When not to use Indefinite articles

- (1) Before plural or uncountable nouns. (**A** and **An** have no plural forms)
- (2) Before names of meals. (We can use them with meals when there is an adjective in the sentence). *They have dinner at nine. He gave us a good breakfast.*
- (3) The article is also used when it is a special meal given in honor or for celebration. *I was invited to dinner* (an ordinary one at their home). *I was invited to a lunch given to welcome the new president.*

A/an & One

For counting or measuring time, distance and weight we can use either **A/An** or **One**. *I need a thousand = I need one thousand. He spent a million = He spent one million.* But there are exceptions when “**One**” cannot be used in the place of **A**. *You can go there once a week. The rent of this house is \$100 a week.* In these sentences “**One**” cannot be used in the place of **A**. Note this sentence:

A bullet is no good (wrongly said). *One bullet is no good.* (I would need many). When we refer to a particular time or season we can use “**One**”. *One day he came late. One summer evening I saw a snake. One day he wanted to go to gym, another day he wanted to go swimming. One girl wanted to dance, another wanted to sing a song.* “**One**” can also be used with some future date. *One day you will regret. One day you will know how difficult it was.* “**One**” is also a pronoun.

- (a) One should always wake up early (all should)
- (b) Did you buy a bike? – Yes I managed to get one.
- (c) Plural: Did you get books? – Yes I managed to get some.



A few/few & A little/little

A few and A little are adjectives. A little is used to denote small amount, a few is used to denote small number (or when the speaker thinks something is small in amount or number). We can use different words to make a meaningful combination. Such as: **Only, quite, hardly any or much.**

- (1) *Only a few of our members have cars.* (very small in number)
- (2) *I have quite a few perfumes.* (quite a lot of perfumes)
- (3) *There was little chance for a nap. Little is known about the side-effects of this drug. Few cities have such splendid parks.*
- (4) *I am unwilling to go with a person I know so little about.*
- (5) *We see fewer rainfalls every year.*
- (6) *I have few coins.* (I wish I had more)
- (7) *I have a few coins.* (I don't want to boast but I have many)
- (8) *I have few friends.* (I am a lonely person)
- (9) *I have a few friends.* (positive)



A little/little are also adverbs

- (1) *It rained a little during the night.*
- (2) *They grumbled a little because they had to wait.*
- (3) *With unfavorable adjectives or adverbs. A little worried, a little impatiently.*
- (4) *With comparative adjectives or adverbs. The wood must be a little thicker, can you please talk a little louder?*
- (5) *Little can also be used with Better or More. His second attempt was little better (**not much better**) than his first. He was little more than (**not much**) a child when his father died.*
- (6) *Adjectives in this way are also possible. A Little-known poet. A little-used footpath.*

Definite Article “The”

We use “**The**” to indicate a noun that is definite, specific or has been previously specified or mentioned. There are various uses of the definite article.

When to use definite article

- (1) We can use it before a noun that has become specific and is mentioned second time.
Lightning struck last night, you can still see the mark on the road.
- (2) To refer to some specific person or thing. *The girl in the blue, the boy with the ice cream, the book which you gave, the place where I saw him.*



- (3) Or to indicate to some specific place. *Mom is in the kitchen.* (The kitchen in this house).
Please give me the keys. (Keys of my bike).
- (4) With superlatives, first, second and only. *The first day. The best day. The only option.*
- (5) We can also use it to denote **The + noun** to refer to class of animals or things. *The cell phone has become a necessary thing. The pollution has made life difficult.*
- (6) But when we use “**man**” to represent human race, we use no article. *Man is becoming ease-loving with the passage of time.*
- (7) The can also be used before a member of specific group of people. *The farmer is getting poorer. The small shopkeeper is earning little.*
- (8) We can use “**The**” with the plural surname, so it represents the specific family. *The smiths. The smith family.*
- (9) The can also be used to distinguish one person from another. *We have two Mr. Smiths, which do you want? I want the Mr. Smith who wrote this application.*

When we use titles or ranks, we use “**The**” with them. *The Duke of New York. The major died, the captain ordered.* A letter written to two or more unmarried sisters jointly can be addressed as: *the misses smith.* (The misses + surname).

When not to use “The”

- (1) We do not use “**The**” before the names of people and names of places.
- (2) We don’t use “**The**” with abstract nouns except when they are used in particular sense. *Men fear death. The death of the politician left his party without a leader.*
- (3) We don’t use “**The**” before the names of games and meals. *He had omelet in breakfast. He plays cricket.*
- (4) We don’t use “**The**” when we are talking about something in general. *Women are expected to like babies. Big hotels all over the world are very much the same.*
- (5) When “**home**” is used alone we do not use “**The**”. *He is at home. He went home. I arrived home after dark.*
- (6) When we visit some place for its primary purpose, we omit “**The**”. Places such as church, hospital, court, bed, college, school, university, etc. But when these places are visited for some other reason we can use “**The**”. *I went to the police station to see the notorious criminal. He goes to prison sometimes to give lectures.*

Exceptional uses of “The”

- Use with the countries that have plural names: *Netherlands, Philippines, etc.*
- Use with the countries that include the words “*republic*”, “*kingdom*” or “*states*”.
- Use with the newspapers’ names.
- Use with the names of hotels and restaurants: *they are staying at the Hilton on the 6th street. We ate at the Golden lion.*



- Use with the names of families but not with the names of individuals: *we are having dinner with the smiths tonight. The Browns are going to the play with us.*
- Use with the names of famous buildings, museums or monuments: *I would love to visit the Eifel tower. We are at the Karachi museum.*
- Use with the names of geographical areas, rivers, mountains, ranges, groups of islands, canals and oceans: *They are travelling in the Arctic. The Nile is one of the most ancient rivers.*
- Use to refer to the things which are unique: *The sun rose at 6:15 this morning. You can go anywhere in the world. The president will be speaking tonight. Clouds drifted across the sky.*

Note: It is also necessary to know how to pronounce the definite article “**The**”. It actually has two sounds. One of them is “**thuh**” or “**tha**” while the other one is “**thee**”. When the word coming after “**the**” starts with a vowel or a consonant with a vowel sound, we say “**thee**”. Similarly, the word coming after “**the**” is a consonant, we pronounce it as “**thuh**”. See the examples below:

The apple (Thee apple)	The book (thuh book)
The eye (Thee eye)	The nose (thuh nose)

We can also say “**thee**” when we have to emphasize or put stress on a specific word. It is called “**Emphatic The**”. For example:

Ali: I saw the (thuh) President yesterday.

Rehan: What! The (thee) President of Pakistan?

Ali: Yes, exactly!

