

A, an and **the** are called the articles. In reality, they are adjectives. Like adjectives, they are placed before nouns. Compare the use of articles and adjectives.

- Call **a** boy from the class.
- Here is **an** umbrella.
- Call **the** boy who came first.

A and **An** are called the indefinite articles.

A or An means one. It does not indicate a particular person or thing.

As a general rule, **a** or **an** is placed before a countable noun in the singular number.

We cannot say—'Give me a milk'. *Milk* is not countable. We can, however, say—'Give me a cup or a glass of milk', since cup or glass is countable.

When to use A

'A' has a vowel sound. So, 'a' is used:

- before a word beginning with a consonant sound, as—a boy, a girl, a cat, a house, a school;
- before a word beginning with a vowel but pronounced as a consonant 'yoo' or 'va', as—a union, a useful work, a university, a unit, a European; a one-rupee note, a one-eyed giant, a one-way road.

When to use An

'An' ends with a consonant sound, so an is used:

- before a word beginning with a vowel sound; as, an apple, an egg, an ink pot, an orange, an uncle, an Englishman
- before a word beginning with a silent 'h', resulting in a vowel sound at the beginning, as—an hour (*our*), an honest (*onest*) man, an heir (*air*), an honourable (*onerable man*);
- before abbreviations beginning with a consonant letter having a vowel sound, as—an M.A., an M.L.A., an M.P., an F.R.S., an S.P.

Use of Indefinite Articles 'A' or 'An'

A or an is used in the sense of:

1. *one*: Give him only **a** rupee. I ate **a** piece of bread.
2. *a certain*: There is **an** old man with eight sons. In the morning, **a** beggar knocked my door.
3. *a class*: **A** cow is a useful animal.
4. *every*: He is paid fifty rupees **a** week.
5. Many common phrases use a or an, as in the following:
as a rule, on a large scale, a severe pain, a bad cold, a headache, on an average, at a loss, make a noise, make a mistake.

Use of Definite Article 'The'

The definite article is used:

1. when we refer to or speak of a particular person or thing, or one already mentioned or known:
 - a. I saw a beggar and gave food to **the** beggar (that I saw).
 - b. This is **the** book I was talking about.
 - c. Call **the** boy (a particular boy)
 - d. Take **the** things that are lying here.
2. with superlatives:
 - a. He is **the** cleverest boy in the class.
3. with comparatives to denote selection out of two:
 - a. He is **the** wiser of the two.
4. before the names of things unique of their kind: the sun, the earth, the moon, the equator, the king, the governor, the prime minister, the principal.
5. before *same* and after *both*, *all* and *half*:
 - a. He is saying *the* same thing.
 - b. Both *the* brothers came.
 - c. All *the* people know this.
 - d. Half *the* people soon left.
6. when a whole class is denoted. This, however, can be done in three ways:
 - a. The cow is a useful animal.
 - b. A cow is a useful animal.
 - c. Cows are useful animals.
7. before the names of rivers, seas, oceans, mountain ranges, groups of islands, directions: the Ganga, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Himalayas, the Alps, the Andamans, the North, the South.

8. before the names of holy books, well-known buildings, newspapers:

the Ramayana, the Koran, the Bible, the Times of India, the Hindustan Times, the Taj Mahal, The Red Fort.

9. before the names of countries (if the name is a common noun), communities:

the U.S.A., the U.K., the Americans, the English, the Hindus, the Muslims.

10. before the names of important events:

the Great War, the Independence of India, the French Revolution.

Omission of Articles

We **don't** use articles before:

1. proper nouns (names of persons, streets, months, days, language, etc.), as:
Ashoka, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatama Gandhi Road, January, Monday, English.
2. material nouns: gold, silver, cotton, silk, wood.
3. abstract nouns: health, honesty, beauty, friendship.

EXERCISES



Use **a** or **an** where necessary. Put a cross in the blank space where the article is not necessary.

1. **A** chair is made of wood.

2. **A** cat has **a** tail.

3. We have **a** university of our own.

4. Is he **an** M.A. or **a** B.A.?

5. **An** orange grows on tree.

6. We drink soup with **a** spoon.

7. **A** one-eyed deer was shot by **a** hunter.

8. I want **a** glass of lemonade.



Insert suitable articles where necessary and rewrite the sentences.

1. In ^a half hour we shall reach ^{the} doctor's lane.

2. I never saw such ^a big hall before.

3. ^{The} Andamans are group of islands in ^{the} Bay of Bengal.

4. That is ^a too difficult problem.

5. ^A Student at ^{the} back of class is reading ^a newspaper.

6. ^{The} Elephant is afraid of ^{the} grunt of pig.

7. At ^{the} top of oak tree there lived ^{an} eagle.

8. English is ^a language of ^{the} English.



Complete the following sentences by filling in A, An or The as may be suitable.

1. Find out ^a letter box to post ^{the} letter I gave you.

2. ^{The} snake never bites unless disturbed.

3. I drank all ^{the} milk that was in ^{the} jug.

4. ^{The} best way to know ^{the} meaning of ^a word is to consult ^a dictionary.

5. Is it harmful to have ^a bath directly after ^a meal?

6. An honest man will always speak the truth.
7. Where could you find a net big enough to catch the moon?
8. We have to wait for the train for an hour and a half.
9. The car made a loud noise.
10. The Ganges flows at the back of those buildings.



Complete the story by filling in articles.

..... A bee was drinking water on the bank of a river. It fell into the river. A dove that was watching all this, plucked a leaf and threw it near the bee. The bee climbed on the leaf and flew out. It thanked the dove for saving its life. After some days, a hunter came there. He saw a dove sitting on a branch of a tree and aimed his gun at it. The bee saw that the dove's life was in danger. It flew at once and stung at the hunter's hand. The hunter missed the aim as his hand felt an acute pain. In the meantime, the dove flew away and its life was saved.