

A QUICK LOOK at USING ARTICLES

Which to Use

When to Use

Example Usage

Tips to Check

A(n)
**Indefinite*

before a noun used for the first time
before a noun that is one of a group
(singular count) or is uncountable
use *a* with consonant sounds
use *an* with vowel sounds
use *an* before an adjective with a vowel

I read a great book recently.
Al needs a new computer.
His book gave an insight into the author's state of mind.
I'd like a piano and an organ.
It's an honor to work here.
My mother is an energetic woman.

What did you read? A book.
What does Al need? A computer.
What would you like? A piano...
What is it? An honor to work...
What is my mother? An energetic...

The
**Definite*

before a noun already introduced
(second mention)
that is a specific noun/identifiable
before superlatives (best, largest...)
before ordinal numbers (first, third, last...)
before a noun used in known context
before a noun used as identification
of a class
at the beginning of a phrase containing an
appositive

I found a dress in the attic.
The dress is beautiful!
The red apple is rotten.
This is the best cake I've ever eaten!
The second test was easier.
Where did Bob park the car?
The elderly need more help.
This is my friend, the one I was telling you about.

Which dress is beautiful? The dress in the attic.
Which apple? The red one.
Which cake? The best one.
Which test? The second one.
Which car? Bob's car.
Which group needs help? The elderly.
Which friend is it? The one...

Some

before a noun of non-specific quantity
plural counts
non-counts but not all members of a group

Al needs some new software.
Al needs some floppy discs.
I would like to listen to some jazz music.

More-than-one, but not a certain amount or all.

"Zero"

before a noun in a general statement
before non-count or mass nouns
before nouns which represent a group,
category or class

Mary needs some new clothes.
He went to Paris looking for love.
Most people enjoy vacations.

Paraphrased with "in general."

USING ARTICLES – the Rules

A(N) or THE, SOME or “NONE”... When do you use them? Which one should you use? When do you not use them at all?

A and an are indefinite articles which identify nouns in a general sense.

Choose a or an according to pronunciation, not spelling: put a before a consonant sound, put an before a vowel sound. H and U at the beginning of a word may have the sound of a consonant or the sound of vowel (for example, a history class, an honor to be here/a unique experience, an understanding teacher). Y always has the sound of a consonant at the beginning of a word.

Use a(n) in these ways:

*Before an unidentified singular countable noun that is one example of its class or kind.

*A dog is standing at the door.
Would you like an apple?*

*Before an unidentified singular countable noun that is representative of its class, as in a definition.

*A dog is a popular pet.
An apple is a kind of fruit.*

*Before a singular predicate noun after a form of be.

*My sister was a good teacher.
English can be a complicated language.*

*With uncountable nouns to mean (a) kind of, or certain.

*The man has an honesty that we all appreciate.
Literature of other countries gives us an insight into their cultures.*

*Before few and little to mean some but not many.

*Only a few students did well on the exam.
A little patience is needed when watching small children.*

To Better Understand How to Use ARTICLES... PICTURE these Situations

There are 3 apples in a bowl. One is red, one is yellow, and the third is green.

Your friend asks, "Do you want an apple?"

You answer, "Sure."

Friend: "Do you want any specific color?"

You: "I would prefer the red one. That kind is my favorite."

General (a/an/any)

Specific (the/his/hat)

It is your first day of class. There are 12 desks in your classroom.

You ask the teacher, "May I sit in this desk?"

The teacher responds, "Do you mean the desk by the door?"

You: "No, I would like to sit near a window."

Teacher: "Okay. Sit in any desk you like."

Specific desk
General (any window)

It's a Friday night. Your friend phones and asks if you want to go out.

Your friend asks, "Do you want to go to a movie?"

You reply, "What do you want to see?"

Friend: "I'll see anything, but not the new, scary one!"

You: "Okay, how about a comedy?"

Friend: "Great. There's the funny movie starring Bruce Willis."

You: "I'll buy the tickets, if you buy the popcorn!"

General movie
A certain movie
A type, or class, of movies
Specific movie
Understood that tickets
and popcorn are for the
this movie

You're going away for the weekend.

Your friend calls, "Are you going to New York City again?"

You answer, "Yes, New York has so much to offer."

Friend: "Are you going to the city for any special reason?"

You: "No, I'm going just to sight-see."

New York is a proper
name, but city requires
an article (the)

You and a friend go shopping at the electronics store, *Best Buy*.

You tell your friend, "I just bought a new computer."

Your friend asks, "Did you buy the Compaq or Gateway?"

You: "I bought a Compaq. The Gateway was too expensive."

Your friend asks, "Do you want to buy some new software

while we're here?"

You: "Yes, let's look at a few programs."

General reference
Specific type
One of a group (a)/class
of computers (the)
More-than-one, but not
a certain number
Some, but not many

CHECK IT OUT...CHECK IT OVER

Review your assignment – read it over checking for each **point** noted below.

Do your **PRONOUNS AGREE** throughout your writing?

Do your **VERBS AGREE** with their subjects?

Did you use the proper **VERB TENSES** throughout your writing?

Did you use the **THESAURUS** to find new vocabulary words? Did you use the right **WORD FORM**?

Did you use the proper **WORD ORDER**?

Are all your sentences **COMPLETE THOUGHTS**? Are any sentences too long or **RUN-ONS**?

Have you double-checked your **SPELLING** and **PUNCTUATION**?

Did you review your writing so that your nouns have the correct **ARTICLES** before them?

Do your paragraphs begin with a **TOPIC SENTENCE** or main idea? Is your **MEANING CLEAR** throughout your writing?