

# English V

## Countable Nouns and Articles

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Lesson 4

# Countable Nouns

**Most nouns have singular and plural forms. These are countable nouns.**

e.g. one box, two boxes.

- *There is **a box** on the table for you.*  
(singular)
- *There are **boxes** on the table for you.*  
(plural)

# Countable Nouns

**You can use “a” or “an” with singular countable nouns.**

e.g. an umbrella, a wheel, a mistake.

- *I made **a mistake**.*
- *It's raining so I need **an umbrella**.*
- *This is **a job** for Superman.*

# Countable Nouns

**You can use plural countable nouns alone.**

e.g. apples, bees, and clouds.

- *There are **clouds** in the sky today.*
- ***Bees** make honey.*
- *We eat **apples** for breakfast.*

# Uncountable Nouns

**Some nouns only have one form (singular).  
These are uncountable nouns.**

e.g. money, rice, gold, happiness, etc.

*I have no **money** in my bank account.  
There is **gold** in the mountains.*

# Uncountable Nouns

**Many uncountable nouns refer to substances, or things.**

e.g. chocolate, water, coffee, milk, sugar, rice, furniture, luggage, equipment, etc.

- *Do you like **chocolate**?*
- *The **milk** is sour – let's make **cheese**.*
- ***Rice** is only edible when it has been cooked.*

# Uncountable Nouns

**Uncountable nouns also refer to abstract ideas or emotions.**

e.g. love, sadness, happiness, education, knowledge, and grammar.

- *Money cannot buy **love**.*
- *We like to enjoy **happiness**.*
- *This **education** is priceless.*

# What are Articles?

- Articles are words that define a noun as specific or non-specific. Consider the following examples:

*After **the** long day, **the** cup of tea tasted particularly good.*

- By using the article **the**, we've shown that it was one specific day that was long and one specific cup of tea that tasted good.

*After **a** long day, **a** cup of tea tastes particularly good.*

- By using the article **a**, we've created a general statement, implying that any cup of tea would taste good after any long day.



# What are Articles?

## The Definite Article

- The definite article is the word “**the**”. It limits the meaning of a noun to one particular thing. For example, your friend might ask, “Are you going to the party this weekend?” The definite article tells you that your friend is referring to a specific party that both of you know about. The definite article can be used with singular, plural, or uncountable nouns. Below are some examples of the definite article used in context:
- *Would you like to see **the** menu?*
- *Please give me **the** red screws; **the** blue ones are not strong enough.*

# What are Articles?

## The Indefinite Article

The indefinite article takes two forms. The form “**a**” is used when it precedes a noun that begins with a consonant. The form “**an**” is used when it precedes a noun that begins with a vowel. The indefinite article indicates that a noun refers to a general idea, rather than a particular one.

For example, you might ask your friend, “Should I bring a gift to the party?” Your friend will understand that you are not asking about a specific type of gift or a specific item. “I am going to bring an apple pie,” your friend replies. Again, the indefinite article indicates that she is not talking about a specific apple pie.

# What are Articles?

The indefinite article only appears with singular nouns.

Consider the following examples of indefinite articles used in context:

*Please hand me **a** towel;* meaning any towel will do.

*Please hand me **an** electric flashlight;* indicating any electric flashlight will do.

# What are Articles?

## Exceptions: Choosing A or An

There are a few exceptions to the general rule of using **a** before words that start with consonants, and **an** before words that begin with vowels. The first letter of the word **honor**, for example, is a consonant, but it is silent or unpronounced. In spite of its spelling, the word **honor** begins with a vowel sound. Therefore, we use **an**.

Consider the example sentences below as an illustration:

Incorrect: *My meeting is in **a** hour.*

Correct: *My meeting is in **an** hour.*

# What are Articles?

Exceptions: Choosing A or An

Similarly, when the first letter of a word is a vowel but is pronounced with a consonant sound, use **a**, as in the sentences below:

Incorrect: *She is **an** United States senator.*

Correct: *She is **a** United States senator.*

Incorrect: *Remember to bring **a** umbrella.*

Correct: *Remember to bring **an** umbrella.*

# What are Articles?

## Omission of Articles

Occasionally, articles are omitted altogether before certain nouns. In these cases, the article is implied but not actually present. This implied article is sometimes called a “**zero article**”. Often, the article is omitted before nouns that refer to abstract ideas. Look at the following examples:

Incorrect: *Let's go out for **a** dinner tonight.*

Correct: *Let's go out for dinner tonight.*

Incorrect: ***The** creativity is a valuable quality to have.*

Correct: *Creativity is a valuable quality to have.*

# What are Articles?

## Omission of Articles

Many languages and nationalities are not preceded by an article. Consider the examples below:

Incorrect: *I studied **the** Spanish in high school.*

Correct: *I studied Spanish in high school.*

Sports and academic subjects do not require articles. For example:

Incorrect: *I like to play **the** basketball.*

Correct: *I like to play basketball.*