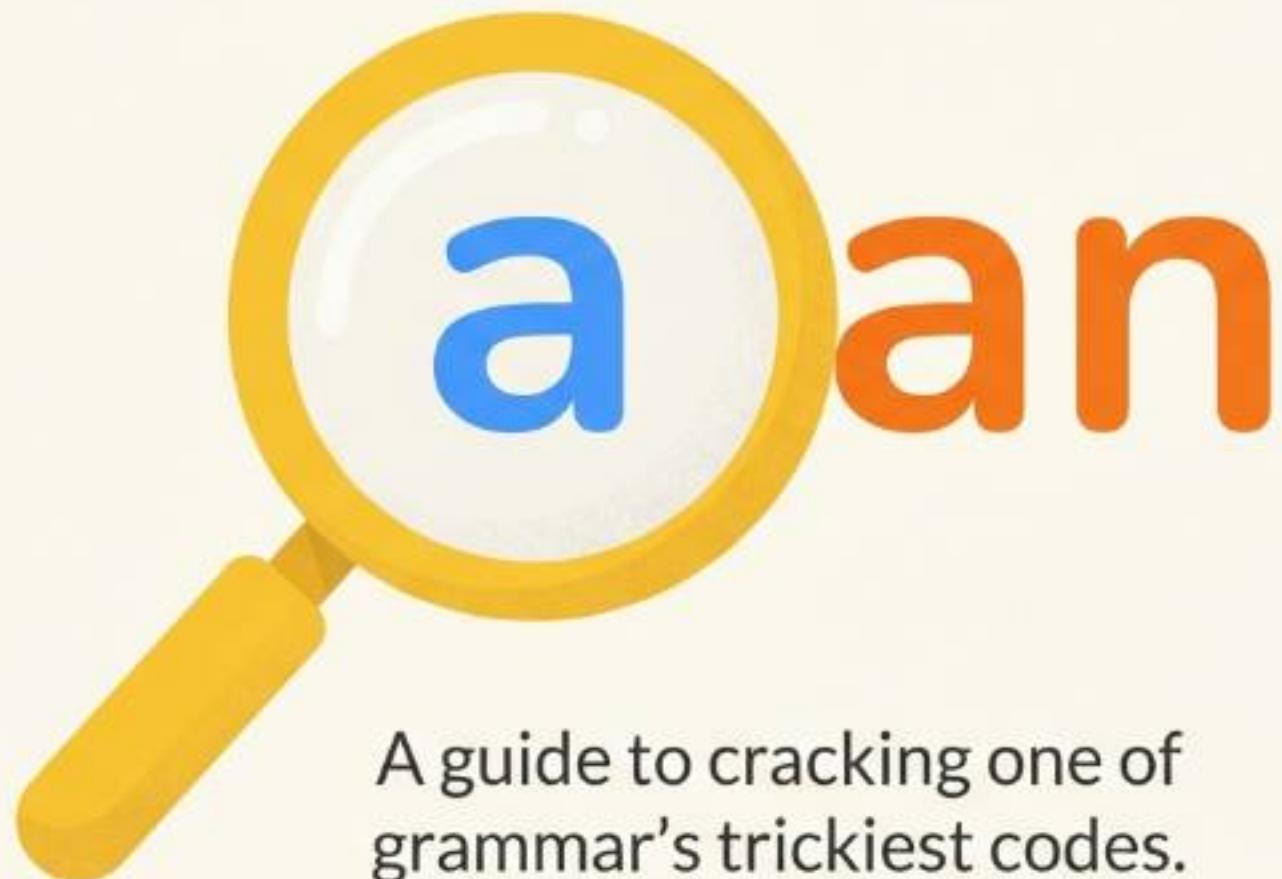




The Secret of 'A' and 'An'



A guide to cracking one of
grammar's trickiest codes.

Meet Two Tiny, Important Words

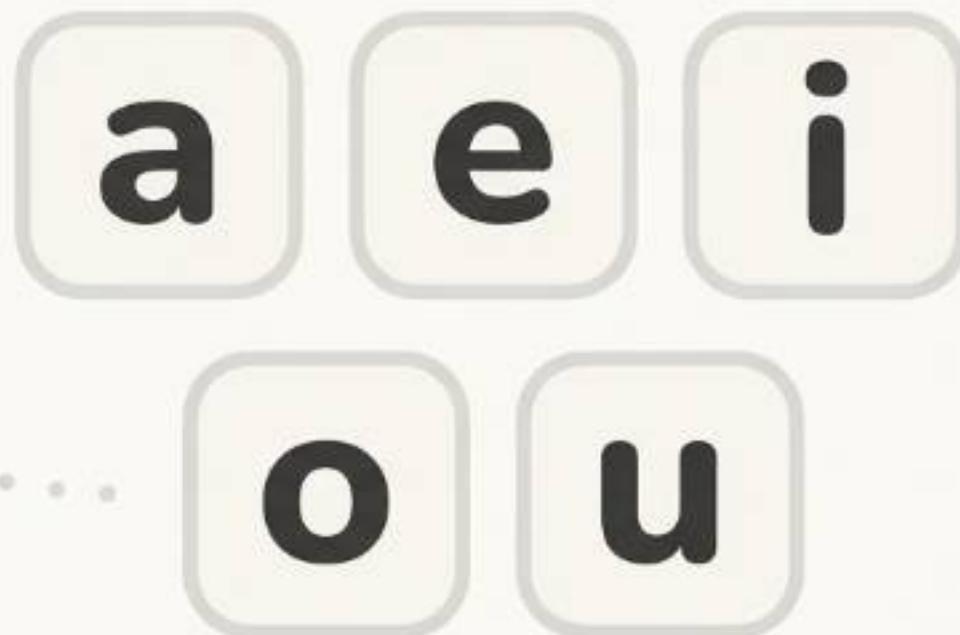
We use “**A**” or “**An**” when we talk about **one thing** for the first time. They help introduce something new into our story.

I saw **a beautiful butterfly** in the garden.



The Case Begins: The ‘Letter Rule’

Many people think the rule is simple: you just look at the first letter of the next word. The rule they follow is: use ‘**a** **an**’ before a vowel.



At First, the Clues Seem to Add Up...



With many words, this 'letter rule' works perfectly.

An before a vowel letter

an apple



an eagle



A before a consonant letter

a dog



a book



But Then, We Find a Puzzle

Look at these examples. The 'letter rule' doesn't work here. Why?



Case File #1

The word is '**university**'.
It starts with a vowel ('u'),
but we say '**a university**'.



Case File #2

The word is '**hour**'.
It starts with a consonant
(‘h’), but we say '**an hour**'.



The Secret is Not What You See. It's What You Hear.



The choice between
“A” and **“An”**
depends on the
SOUND
the next word
begins with.





The Rule for Vowel Sounds

Use **An** before a word that starts with a **vowel sound**.

What are Vowel Sounds?

The sounds you hear at the beginning of words like:



apple



eagle



igloo



orphan



umbrella



The Rule for Consonant Sounds

Use **A** before a word that starts with a **consonant sound**.

What are Consonant Sounds?

The sounds you hear at the beginning of words like:



dog



book



house



zoo



giraffe

Solving the Case of the ‘Silent H’

- **Case Review:** **an** hour
- **The Clue:** The letter ‘h’ is silent.
You don’t hear it.
- **The Sound:** The first sound you actually hear is ‘ow-er,” which is a vowel sound.
- **Conclusion:** That’s why we use **An**.



Cracking the Code of the Tricky ‘U’

- **Case Review:** **a** university
- **The Clue:** The letter ‘u’ here doesn’t make an ‘uh’ sound like in ‘umbrella.’
- **The Sound:** It makes a long ‘yew’ sound, as if it starts with the letter ‘Y’. The ‘y’ sound is a consonant sound.
- **Conclusion:** That’s why we use **A**.



See the Sound Rule in Action

Use **a** with a
Consonant Sound

a dog 

a house 

a giraffe 

a university 



Use **an** with a
Vowel Sound

an apple 

an igloo 

an umbrella 

an hour 

Your Turn to be the Sound Detective!

Choose 'A' or 'An' for each word. Remember to say them aloud and listen to the first sound!

1. _____ orange
2. _____ horse
3. _____ egg
4. _____ umbrella
5. _____ pencil



The Detective's Report: How Did You Do?

1. **an** orange (starts with an 'o' vowel sound)
2. **a** horse (starts with a 'h' consonant sound)
3. **an** egg (starts with an 'e' vowel sound)
4. **an** umbrella (starts with an 'uh' vowel sound)
5. **a** pencil (starts with a 'p' consonant sound)

Your New Grammar Superpower: The Sound Check

Forget the confusing “letter rule.” From now on, just do this:



If it starts with a vowel sound, use **An**.

1. **Say** the word aloud.
2. **Listen** to the very first sound.

If it starts with a consonant sound, use **A**.

You've Cracked the Code!



You are now an article expert. 😊