

Articles

Introduction to Articles

An article is a **word that is used for indicating whether a noun is specific or non-specific**. In other words, when an article is present before a noun, it shows whether that noun is some general noun or some particular noun.

There are two types of articles—the **indefinite article** ‘a’ or ‘an’, and the **definite article** ‘the’. The first type points out non-specific or general nouns and the second type points out specific or particular nouns.

For example:

A boy

(Here, the presence of ‘a’ shows that some general/non-specific ‘boy’ is being talked about.)

An elephant

(Here, the presence of ‘an’ shows that some general/non-specific ‘elephant’ is being talked about.)

The red car

(Here, the presence of ‘the’ shows that some particular/specific ‘red car’ is being talked about.)

Articles belong to a larger group of words known as **determiners**. What is a determiner? **A determiner is a word that ‘determines or decides’ something about the noun before which it is placed**. Before proceeding to study about articles in particular, let us find out more about determiners.

The Indefinite Article

‘A’ or ‘an’ is termed as the indefinite article because it does not specify the noun it talks about. In other words, **it leaves the noun indefinite**.

For example:

A girl is singing.

(Here, the noun 'girl' is left indefinite because of the use of the indefinite article. It is not specified as to which girl is singing.)

An umbrella is missing.

(Here, the noun 'umbrella' is left indefinite because of the use of the indefinite article. It is not specified as to which umbrella is missing.)

A student should be regular about his studies.

(Here, 'student' means all students in general. In this case, 'a student' represents the entire category of students.)

I am looking for **an honest person** to do this job.

(Here, 'honest person' means all honest persons in general. In this case, 'an honest person' represents any one honest person from the entire category of honest persons.)

A Ms. Bindu is on the phone.

(Here, 'a' is used before 'Ms. Bindu' so as to show that the person is not known to the speaker.)

The indefinite article is used for indicating a singular countable noun. In the previous examples, the indefinite article before each noun shows that exactly one girl is singing and that exactly one umbrella is missing.

The indefinite article 'an' is used when the word that follows it begins with a vowel sound.

For example:

He threw **an egg** at the player.

(Here, 'an' is used because the word that follows—'egg'— begins with a vowel sound.)

The mail arrived **an hour** ago.

(Here, 'an' is used because the word that follows—'hour'—begins with a vowel sound.)

He is **an intelligent man**.

(Here, 'an' is used because the word that follows—'intelligent'—begins with a vowel sound.)

The indefinite article 'a' is used when the word that follows it begins with a consonant sound.

For example:

There is **a mouse** in the room.

(Here, 'a' is used because the word that follows—'mouse'—begins with a consonant sound.)

His father has **a university degree**.

(Here, 'a' is used because the word that follows—'university'—begins with a consonant sound.)

I saw **a beautiful umbrella**.

(Here, 'a' is used because the word that follows—'beautiful'—begins with a consonant sound.)

The Definite Article

'The' is termed as the definite article because it specifies the noun it talks about. In other words, **it makes the noun definite**.

For example:

The postman is waiting at the door.

(Here, the noun 'postman' refers to a particular or specific postman.)

The children are making a lot of noise.

(Here, the noun 'children' refers to a particular group of children.)

I have two pets—a dog and a cat. **The cat** is lazier than **the dog**.

(Here, the indefinite article 'a' is used before the nouns 'dog' and 'cat', when they are introduced for the first time. However, the definite article 'the' is used when these nouns are mentioned again.)

The definite article is used for indicating a singular countable noun.

For example:

The car has been stolen.

(Here, 'the' is used before the singular form of the noun 'car'.)

The definite article is used for indicating a plural countable noun.

For example:

The apples were very sweet.

(Here, 'the' is used before the plural form of the noun 'apple'.)

The definite article is used for indicating an uncountable noun.

For example:

The police asked the thief where **the gold** was hidden.

(Here, 'the' is used before the uncountable noun 'gold'.)

The definite article is used before nouns that are considered unique, and also before names of certain places, organisations, certain books, newspapers, famous buildings and certain abbreviations.

For example:

The sun, The earth, The moon, The sky, The equator

The North Pole, The South Pole, The Indian Ocean, The Arabian Sea

The Brahmaputra River, The Thar Desert, The Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The Himalayas, The United Kingdom, The United States of America, The Kingdom of Norway, The Indian Republic

The United Nations, The Congress

The Mahabharata, The Ramayana, The Odyssey, The Iliad, The Vedas, The Puranas, The Quran, The Bible, The Bhagavad Gita

The Indian Express, The Times of India, The Guardian, The Tribune, The Statesman

The Rashtrapati Bhavan, The Parliament House of India, The Red Fort, The Taj Mahal

The UK, The US, The BJP, The CPI, The CPI (M)