

## Definite and indefinite articles

The word *the* is a definite article. Use it to:

- refer to a specific instance of something. For example:  
Click the OK button.
- refer to all instances of something. For example:  
The **for** loop is a common programming construct.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. Use them to:

- refer to a classification of something, but not a specific instance of one.  
Two examples:  
Press a key to continue.  
Use a compiler to build this code.
- refer to something generically. For example:  
An image from the video is displayed.  
When the task is complete, a new window opens.

There are two indefinite articles. Which one you use depends on the object it precedes.

**Use *a* when the object begins with a consonant, or sounds like it begins with a consonant when**

a UNIX system  
a window  
a button  
a TCP port

**Use *an* when the object begins with a vowel, or sounds like it begins with a vowel when pronounced**

an MPEG stream  
an application  
an error message

## Exercise

Identify the incorrect articles in these sentences:

1. Log in to the workstation VM and open the window to /home/student/code.
2. Click an Next button to continue.

3. By default, there are three windows on the desktop. Read a title bar of each window to find the window called Foo. In this window, enter your password in a text field.