Articles—Worksheet

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| **What are articles?**   * In English, we use the articles “a,” “an,” and “the.” * Articles are parts of speech that announce nouns. * They appear before a noun. * They give the reader information about the noun. They tell us if the noun is specific or general. For example, if I mention “a cookie,” I’m talking about cookies in general. If I mention “the cookie,” I’m talking about a specific cookie. * In some cases, you do not need to use any article at all. |

**What is a noun?**

We know that articles give information about nouns. So, to use articles properly, we must understand what nouns are.

**Nouns** are the names of people, places, things, activities, or ideas. **Here are some examples:**

People: Harry Potter, nurse, student

Places: Valencia, College of the Canyons, mall

Things: phone, pizza, skateboard

Activities: hiking, surfing, skating

Ideas: love, equality, democracy

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| **Types of Nouns:**   * **Count Nouns:** It is possible to count individual items. Count nouns can be singular or plural. For example, “pencil” is a count noun. If I had a box of pencils in front of me, I could count the individual pencils in the box. * **Noncount Nouns:** It is not possible to count individual items. Noncount nouns cannot be made plural. For example, “gasoline” is a noncount noun. If I had a gallon of gasoline in front of me, I could not count the individual gasolines.   *Note:* Some nouns may be countable in another language, but not in English.   * **Gerunds:** Present participles used as a noun. Gerunds cannot be preceded by “the.” For example, I could tell you, “Running is difficult.” In this sentence, “running” is used as a noun. |

**Indefinite Articles: A/An**

**What is an indefinite article?**

The indefinite articles are “a” and “an.” They show that the noun can refer to any member of a group.

Example 1: *My son wants* ***a*** *car for his eighteenth birthday.*

This sentence refers to any car. We don’t know which specific car that he wants.

Example 2: ***An*** *ant can lift twenty times its own body weight.*

This sentence refers to any ant. There are many ants in the world, and this sentence could describe any of them.

**Use indefinite articles to show membership.**

Examples:

* Miguel is a salsa dancer. (There is a large group of salsa dancers, and Miguel is one member.)
* Lavpreet is a practicing Hindu. (Lavpreet is a member of the group of people known as Hindus.)

**Use an indefinite article to tell readers:**

* The noun is singular
* The noun is a member of a large group
* The noun represents the whole group

Example: **A** dragonfly can travel up to 60 mph.

In this example, we are discussing one dragonfly (singular), but it is a member of a large group of all the dragonflies in the world. The dragonfly in our sentence represents all dragonflies.

**Where indefinite articles DO NOT go:**

1. Do not use “a” or “an” before a proper noun (the name of a person or place).

Incorrect: Carolina wants to take her picture in front of **an** Eiffel Tower.

Correct: Carolina wants to her picture in front of **the** Eiffel Tower.

1. Do not use “a” or “an” before plural or noncount nouns.

Incorrect: Susan bought **a** watermelons to make fruit salad.

Correct: Susan bought watermelons to make fruit salad.

Incorrect: The car needs **a** gas before we can drive to San Diego.

Correct: The car needs gas before we can drive to San Diego.

1. Do not use “a” or “an” before a pronoun (a word that replaces a noun).

Incorrect: I’ve been looking for **a** him.

Correct: I’ve been looking for him.

1. Do not use “a” or “an” before an adjective without a noun after it.

Incorrect: Nancy prefers the dress in **a** green.

Correct: Nancy prefers the dress in green.

**“A” or “An?”**

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| When do I use “a?” | When do I use “an?” |
| Use the indefinite article **a** before nouns that start with consonant sounds (b, d, k, t, etc.).   * A rocket * A shell * A whale   Use **a** when a word begins with a “yoo” or “wuh” as a consonant sound.   * A university * A one hundred dollar bill | Use the indefinite article **an** before nouns that start with vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u, etc.)   * An iceberg * An eagle * An olive   Use **an** when using a letter of the alphabet that begins with a vowel sound   * Draw **an “x”** on the paper. * I’m going to **an NAACP**-sponsored event.   Use **an** when using a word that begins with “h,” but the “h” sound is silent   * An hour * An honest person |

**Common Phrases and Idioms (Sayings) that Use “A” or “An:”**

1. Once a day / a week / a month / a year
2. Two (or any number over one) times a day / a week
3. An hour after midnight / noon / sunrise
4. Half an hour earlier / later
5. A pair of socks / a couple of times / a number of items
6. Sound like a broken record: to repeat the same thing over and over
7. A horse of a different color: a completely different matter.
8. A chip on one’s shoulder: to have a bad attitude
9. Don’t judge a book by its cover: don’t judge something by its outward appearance
10. A slap on the wrist: a light punishment for doing something wrong
11. A piece of cake: something very easy
12. At a glance: to understand something almost immediately

**Definite Article: The**

**What is a definite article?**

The definite article is “the.” It shows that the noun refers to a specific member of a group.

Example 1: ***The*** *house is decorated with lights*.

The sentence refers to a specific house. It does not apply to any house, but to one particular house.

Example 2: Aziz was afraid to disturb **the** bee hive.

The sentence refers to one particular bee hive.

**Definite Article Rules:**

1. The definite article “the” can be used before count OR noncount nouns.

Examples:

* **The** textbook I bought yesterday was expensive. (“Textbook” is a count noun.)
* Sara wasted **the** money her mother gave her on candy and stickers. (“Money” is a noncount noun.)

1. The definite article “the” can be used before singular OR plural nouns.

Examples:

* Did you see **the** movie I recommended? (“Movie” is singular.)
* Did you taste **the** grapes I gave you? (“Grapes” are plural.)

1. Use the definite article “the” when there is only one of something (a unique or singular object).

Examples:

* the world, the sun, the earth, the moon, the sky, etc.
* Neil Armstrong was the first man on **the moon**.

1. Use the definite article “the” before certain nouns.

Examples:

* the movies, the theater, the radio, the internet, the post office, the bank, the station, etc.
* I have to go to **the bank** before I can meet you at **the movies**.

1. Use “the” before musical instruments when discussing the instrument in general.

Examples:

* I studied **the piano** for five years before I fell in love with **the drums**.
* Jae thinks **the tuba** is the most difficult instrument to play in marching band because it is so heavy.

1. Use “the” when talking about a type of animal.

Examples:

* Today’s dogs are descendants of **the wolf**.
* **The housefly** lives only two weeks.

1. Use “the” when talking about a group of people.

Examples:

* After graduating college, Sam wanted to help **the homeless**.
* Lisa was surprised to see just how much **the young** use their cell phones.

**Proper nouns that use “the:”**

Proper nouns name specific nouns. For example, “Los Angeles” is the name of a specific city. It is a proper noun.

1. Use “the” if the proper noun uses the pattern “the…of.”

* The Fourth of July
* The University of California

1. Use “the” with plural proper nouns.

* The Los Angeles Dodgers
* The Black Keys

1. Use “the” with collective proper nouns (a noun that names a group).

* The Justice League
* The Sierra Club

**Geographical Rules:**

1. Use “the” before the names of oceans, seas, rivers, forests, mountain ranges, and deserts (but not lakes).

* I saw **the Mississippi River** when I visited New Orleans.
* Lake Havasu is located in **the Mojave Desert**.

1. Use “the” before points on the globe and geographical areas.

* Peter crossed **the equator** to visit **the South Pole**.
* My cousins from **the Middle East** are visiting for a month.

1. Use “the” before the names of some specific countries and cities (but not all).

* Maria’s mother had always dreamed of moving to **the United States**.
* I wanted to visit the tulip fields in **the Netherlands**.

**Leaving Out Articles**

**When do we leave out articles?**

1. Do not use an article when generalizing about plural count nouns.

* Elephants are intelligent creatures. (“Elephants” are plural count nouns.)
* You should always recycle used water bottles (“Bottles” are plural count nouns.)

1. Do not use an article when generalizing about noncount nouns.

* Time is money. (Both “time” and “money” are noncount nouns.)
* Furniture enhances the beauty of a room. (“Furniture” is a noncount noun.)

1. Do not use an article before a gerund when making a general statement.

* Skiing is a winter sport. (“Skiing” is a gerund.)
* The boy’s parents taught him that lying is wrong. (“Lying” is a gerund.)

1. Do not use an article with names of languages or nationalities.

* Sevan speaks four languages: Armenian, Farsi, German, and English.
* When Sally went to Seoul as an exchange student, she was looking forward to making Korean friends.

1. Do not use an article when using the name of sports.

* He wanted to play basketball professionally.
* Canada won the gold medal in hockey.

1. Do not use an article when using the names of academic subjects.

* She needs to pass math before she can begin her engineering classes.
* Geology is the study of the Earth, including rocks and volcanoes.

**Geographical Rules:**

Do not use articles before the names of:

* Most countries or territories (Canada, China, Puerto Rico)
* Towns, cities, or states (Valencia, Paris, California)
* Streets (Front Street, Lakewood Avenue, Dogwood Crescent)
* Lakes: (Lake Ontario, Lake Placid, Big Bear Lake)
* Mountains (Mount Everest, K2, Mount Kilimanjaro)
* Continents (North America, Africa, Antarctica)
* Islands (Hawaii, Crete, Kodiak)

***Please note:*** There are some exceptions to these rules, such as “the Matterhorn” (a mountain). You should look up unfamiliar place names before using them in a sentence.

Exercises

**Exercise 1:**

*Instructions:* For each sentence, select “a,” “an,” “the,” or “no article.”

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| 1. Fatima is \_\_ nurse. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Did Mike get \_\_ job he applied for? | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Would you like to eat \_\_ orange? | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Have you looked at \_\_ stars tonight? | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Watching \_\_ TV is my favorite pastime activity. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Children bring joy to \_\_ world. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. I haven’t been to \_\_ movies for a long time. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Bina goes to her favorite park at least twice \_\_ week. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. Go to \_\_ bed when you are done with your homework. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. In general, I think \_\_ dogs are very friendly. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. \_\_ old deserve our respect. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. \_\_ Lake Victoria is beautiful. | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. We drove along \_\_ LA River . | a | an | the | no article |
| 1. You just took a test. Was \_\_ test easy? | a | an | the | no article |

**Exercise 2:**

*Instructions:* Read the below paragraphs and insert articles where necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6-week-old cheetah cub at \_\_\_\_\_ San Diego Zoo Safari Park is spending lots of time with his \_\_\_\_\_ new dog companion. \_\_\_\_\_ young cheetah, Ruuxa, was chosen to be raised as \_\_\_\_\_ animal ambassador at \_\_\_\_\_ Safari Park after \_\_\_\_\_ he was rejected by his mother and had to be hand raised by keepers.

\_\_\_\_\_ cheetahs are usually born in litters of three to five cubs; when a singleton [a single cub] is born, \_\_\_\_\_ mother often rejects \_\_\_\_\_ cub since \_\_\_\_\_ chance of \_\_\_\_\_ cub surviving in \_\_\_\_\_ wild would be minimal. \_\_\_\_\_ cheetah cub and puppy, \_\_\_\_\_7-week-old Rhodesian ridgeback puppy named Raina, are being introduced by animal care staff at \_\_\_\_\_ Safari Park. \_\_\_\_\_ puppy will be raised with \_\_\_\_\_ cheetah and serve as \_\_\_\_\_ his lifelong companion.

Safari Park cheetahs selected for training as \_\_\_\_\_ ambassadors are paired early in life with \_\_\_\_\_ domestic dog. As \_\_\_\_\_ two companions grow up together, \_\_\_\_\_ dog’s body language will communicate to \_\_\_\_\_ cheetah that there’s nothing to fear in new or public surroundings, which relaxes and calms \_\_\_\_\_ cheetah.

**Source:**

San Diego Zoo. “New Cheetah Cub for San Diego Zoo Safari Park’s Ambassador Program.” *San Diego Zoo*. San Diego Zoo, 10 June 2014. Web. 23 July 2014.

Self-Reflection

Write a brief paragraph (3-5 sentences) answering the following questions:

* What was the most important thing you learned in this workshop?
* How will you use this in your college classes?