



DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE ARTICLES: PART I

Notes:

1. The written lesson is below.
2. Links to quizzes, tests, etc. are to the left.

The difference between definite articles and indefinite articles can be observed in the following two sentences:

Give me the chocolate chip cookie.

Give me a cookie, please.

Imagine a plate full of cookies. There are peanut butter cookies, sugar cookies, gingerbread cookies, and one chocolate chip cookie.

The first sentence speaks of a particular (or definite) cookie:

*Give me **the** chocolate chip cookie.*

The second sentence speaks of any of a number of cookies (or an indefinite cookie):

*Give me **a** cookie, please.*

The difference between the definite and indefinite articles is the difference between talking about a specific cookie, or any old cookie at all.

the cookie

a cookie

In English, the definite article is the word “the” regardless of whether the noun it introduces is singular or plural.

the cookie

the cookies

In Spanish, the definite article has 4 forms, depending on whether the noun is masculine, feminine, singular or plural.

el gato

the male cat

los gatos

the male cats

la gata

the female cat

las gatas

the female cats

Note: The masculine plural definite and indefinite articles (los, unos) are also used to indicate a group of mixed sex. Thus, “los gatos” could refer to a group of 10 male cats, or it could refer to a group of 9 female cats and one male cat.

The 4 forms of the definite article are:

el

masculine singular

la

feminine singular

los

masculine plural

las

feminine plural

In English, the indefinite article is the word “a,” “an,” or “some.”

a cookie

an apple

some books

In Spanish, the indefinite article has 4 forms, depending on whether the noun is masculine, feminine, singular or plural.

un gato

a male cat

unos gatos

some male cats

una gata

a female cat

unas gatas

some female cats

Note: Remember, as long as the group of creatures has at least one male member, the masculine plural article is used. Thus, “unos gatos” could refer to a group of 10 male cats, or it could refer to a group of 9 female cats and one male cat.

The 4 forms of the indefinite article are:

un

masculine singular

una

feminine singular

unos

masculine plural

unas

feminine plural

Here are the definite and indefinite articles together:

el, un

masculine singular

la, una

feminine singular

los, unos

masculine plural

las, unas

feminine plural

Each of the following has a different meaning:

el gato

the male cat

los gatos

the male cats (or a mixed group)

la gata

the female cat

las gatas

the female cats

un gato

a male cat

unos gatos

some male cats (or a mixed group)

una gata

a female cat

unas gatas

some female cats

“Un” and “una” can mean “one,” “a,” or “an.”

un libro

one book, a book

una pluma

one pen, a pen

una manzana

one apple, an apple

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