**A1**, **a** /eɪ/**noun** (*plural***A’s**, **a’s**)

**1** [**countable, uncountable**] the first [letter](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/letter) of the English [alphabet](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/alphabet)

**2** [**countable, uncountable**] the [sixth](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/sixth) [note](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/note) in the [musical](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/musical) [**scale**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/scale) of [C](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/c) [**major**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/major) or the musical [**key**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/key) [based](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/base) on this note

**3** [**countable**] the highest [mark](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/mark) that a [student](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/student) can get in an [examination](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/examination) or for a piece of workI got an A in French.Julia got **straight A’s** (=all A’s) in high school.→[**A level**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/a-level)

**4** →[**an A student**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/an-a-student)

**5** [**uncountable**] used to [refer](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/refer) in a [short](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/short) way to one of two different things or people. You can call the [second](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/second#second__13) one [B](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/b)A demands £500, B offers £100.→[**plan A**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/plan-a-plan-a)

**6** →[**from A to B**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/from-a-to-b)

**7** →[**from A to Z**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/from-a-to-z)

**8** →[**A34, A40 etc**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/a40-etc-a34)

**9** [**uncountable**] a [common](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/common) [type](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/type) of [blood](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/blood)

**A2**the written [abbreviation](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/abbreviation) of**amp** or **amps**

**a** /ə; *strong* eɪ/ ●●● **S1** **W1** (also**an**)**indefinite article**, **determiner**

**1** used to show that you are talking about someone or something that has not been [mentioned](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/mention) before, or that your [listener](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/listener) does not know aboutWe have a problem.There was a hole in the fence.Suddenly they heard a loud bang.→[**the**1](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/the)  
**2** used to show that you are referring to a [general](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/general) type of person or thing and not a [specific](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/specific) person or thingWould you like a sandwich?  
I want to train to be an engineer.He’s a really nice man.Take a look at this.It needs a good clean.  
**3** used before someone’s family [name](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/name) to show that they [belong](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/belong) to that familyOne of his daughters had married a Rothschild.  
**4** one

a thousand poundsa dozen eggsYou’ll have to wait an hour or two.  
**5** used in some [phrases](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/phrase) that say how much of something there isThere were **a lot** of people at the party. **A few** weeks from now I’ll be in Venice.You have caused **a great deal** of trouble.  
**6** used to [mean](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/mean) ‘each’ when [stating](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/state) [prices](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/price), [rates](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/rate), or [speeds](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/speed)I get paid once a month.The eggs cost $2 a dozen.  
**7** used before [singular](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/singular) [nouns](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/noun) to mean all things of a particular typeA square has four sides (=all squares have four sides).A child needs love and affection.  
**8** used once before two nouns that are mentioned [together](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/together#together__11) very oftenI’ll fetch you a cup and saucer.Does everyone have a knife and fork?  
**9** used before the -ing [forms](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/form) of [verbs](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/verb) when they are used as nouns referring to an [action](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/action), [event](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/event), or [sound](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/sound)There was a beating of wings overhead.Bernice became aware of a humming that seemed to come from all around her.  
**10** used before nouns that are usually [**uncountable**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/uncountable) when other [information](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/information) about the [quality](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/quality), feeling etc is [added](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/add) by an [adjective](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/adjective), phrase, or [**clause**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/clause)Candidates must have a good knowledge of chemistry.  
**11** used before the name of a [substance](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/substance), [food](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/food) etc to refer to a particular type of itUse a good cheese to make the sauce.plants that grow well in a moist soil  
**12** used before the name of a [drink](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/drink) to refer to a [cup](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/cup) or [glass](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/glass) of that drinkCan I get you a coffee?Renwick went to the bar and ordered a beer.  
**13** used before the name of a [famous](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/famous) [artist](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/artist) to refer to a [painting](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/paint) by that artistan early Rembrandt  
**14** used before a name to mean someone or something that has the same qualities as that person or thingShe was hailed as a new Marilyn Monroe.  
**15** used before someone’s name when you do not know who they areThere is a Mr Tom Wilkins on the phone.  
**16** used before the names of days, [months](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/month), [seasons](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/season), and events in the year to refer to a particular oneWe arrived in England on a cold wet Sunday in 1963.I can’t remember a Christmas like it.

**USAGE: A, an**•Before a word beginning with a vowel sound, use **an**:  
an elephant  
an umbrella  
an obvious mistake  
•Use **an** before an 'h' that is not pronounced:  
an hour later  
an honest explanation  
•Use **a** before a 'u' that is pronounced like 'you':  
a university  
a unique opportunity  
•Use **an** before an abbreviation that is pronounced with a vowel sound at the start:  
an SOS call  
an MP3 file from the Corpus

**a-1** /ə/**prefix  
1** in a particular [condition](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/condition) or wayaloudalive (=living)with nerves all a-tingle (=tingling)  
**2** *old use* in, to, at, or on somethingabed (=in bed)afar (=far away) from the Corpus  
**a-**• atop

**a-2** /eɪ, æ, ə/**prefix**not or withoutamoral (=not moral)atypically (=not typically)

**A\*** /ˌeɪ ˈstɑː $ -ˈstɑːr/**noun** [**countable, uncountable**]the highest mark that a student can get in a [**GCSE**](https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/gcse) examination