Grammar: Definite and Indefinite Articles
How many articles can you see?

I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch.

The sandwich was not very nice, but the apple was lovely.
Four... Why does Julie start with a/an and then use the?

I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch.

The sandwich was not very nice, but the apple was lovely.
Definite and Indefinite articles

Because...

...this is the first time she talked about the sandwich and the apple.

I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch.

The sandwich was not very nice, but the apple was lovely.

...Lucy now knows which sandwich and which apple Julie is talking about.
I saw cat. cat was sitting on fence. fence was painted green. cat jumped off fence when it saw ant. ant ran into hole when it saw cat so cat didn't catch ant.
Using articles

Use the **indefinite article** *(a/an)* if:

1. You think the person reading your essay *doesn’t know* the ‘identity’ of the noun
2. You are writing about something in general (not unique, non-specific)

Use the **definite article** *(the)* if:

1. The person reading your essay *knows* the ‘identity’ of the noun
2. The noun was mentioned earlier in your sentence/paragraph/essay
3. The noun being ‘identified’ is obvious (واضح) or unique (فرد) or specific (محدد)
I want to watch a film tonight.

No, I think I want to watch an action film.

What about a romance film or a comedy film?

Good idea, that is the best film ever!
The Indefinite Article

Use the **indefinite article** *(a/an)*

1. To refer to something for the *first* time e.g.:
   
   “I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch.”

2. To say what *job* somebody does e.g.:
   
   “My brother is an engineer.” “My mother is a doctor at Tiwam hospital”

! We can only use *a/an* with **singular countable nouns** e.g.:

   I like to eat an apple every day.  
   I like to eat Ø apples every day.

   I like to drink Ø water.  
   I like to eat Ø rice.
Use the **definite article** *(the)*

1. If the reader *knows* the noun you are writing about e.g.:
   - *The* table below shows...
   - *The* second effect I will discuss is...
   - *The* first key reason I will focus on is...

2. With **superlatives** e.g.:
   - *the* best    *the* longest    *the* most beautiful    *the* worst

3. When the noun is **obvious** *(واضح)* or **unique** *(فريد)* or **specific** *(محدد)* e.g.:
   - *the* sun        *the* Government        *the* President        *the* world        *the* 1970s

4. With **some proper nouns** e.g.:
   - **Nationalities**  *the* British  *the* Emiratis
   - **Some countries**  *the* UK  *the* UAE
   - **Rivers**  *the* Nile  *the* Ganges
   - **Seas/Oceans**  *the* Arabian sea  *the* Indian ocean
The Zero Article

Use the **zero article** (Ø i.e. nothing)

1. With **plural and uncountable nouns** and also, when writing about a noun in general:
   
   “Ø**Gold** is expensive these days”   “Ø**Scientists** are clever”

2. With **certain proper nouns** e.g.:
   
   **Continents**   *Europe, Africa*   **Most countries**   *Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait*
   
   **Cities, Emirates and Towns**   *London, Tokyo, New York, Doha*   *Fujairah, Al Ain*
   
   **Mountains**   *Everest, Jebel Hafeet*
   
   **Companies**   *Toyota, Nissan, Etisalat, Apple, Samsung*

   (But **not** specific company products:   *the Nissan Patrol, the Samsung Galaxy SIII*)
[Please use capitals when necessary.]

... table below provides some facts and figures on two cars, they are ... Nissan Patrol and ... Toyota Landcruiser. In this report I am going to compare and contrast ... similarities and ... differences between them.
My brother, who is AN accountant, said to my sister, who is AN company director, that his friend from AN Tunisia read a very interesting book. AN book was called War and Peace. However, my friend from AN New Zealand, who lives here in AN UAE, said that AN book is actually quite boring!
There are many mountains in Europe. The tallest is Mount Blanc. The Pico De Europa is the highest mountain in Spain. The river Danube, in Germany, is longer than the river Thames in the UK, but shorter than the Voga river. The Voga river is the longest in all of Europe.
articles are very common in English

“the” is the 5th most common word in the English language

“a” is the 6th most common word in English [“an” is 32nd]

› use “a” if the noun starts with a consonant

› use ”an” if the noun starts with a vowel [a, e, i, o, u]