

Grammar: Definite and Indefinite Articles

Identifying 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.



Julie



Lucy

Using articles

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.



Julie



Lucy

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



Julie



Lucy

Definite and Indefinite articles



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** (فريد) or **specific** (محدد)

Definite and Indefinite articles

I want to watch
film tonight.

No, I think I want to
watch action film.

Good idea, that is
best film ever!

. . . . romance film or
. . . . comedy film?

What about one
with Bruce Lee?



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.

The Definite Article



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** (∅ i.e. nothing)

① With **plural** and **uncountable nouns** and also, when writing about a noun in general:
“∅**Gold** is expensive these days” “∅**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*)

Fill in the gaps using, 'the' or 'a'/'an' or 'Ø'



[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.

Fill in the gaps using, 'the' or 'a'/'an' or 'Ø'



[Please use capitals when necessary.]

My brother, who is accountant, said to my sister, who is company director, that his friend from Tunisia read a very interesting book. book was called War and Peace. However, my friend from New Zealand, who lives here in UAE, said that book is actually quite boring!

Fill in the gaps using, 'the' or 'a'/'an' or 'Ø'



[Please use capitals when necessary.]

There are many mountains in Europe tallest is Mount Blanc.
..... Pico De Europa is highest mountain in Spain. river
Danube, in Germany is longer than river Thames in UK,
but shorter than Voga river. Voga river is longest in all
of Europe.

&c. 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]