



## Articles

There are three words known as **articles**. These words are “**a**”, “**an**”, and “**the**”.

The **definite article** (the) is used when referring to a particular noun. If I use a definite article, it is clear what I am referring to. There’s only one possibility.

**Examples:** Please bring me the newspaper.

I say “the newspaper” because I think you know which newspaper I want.

What happened to the apples in the fridge?

I say “the apples” because I’m telling you which apples I mean: I mean apples that were in the fridge.

I say “the fridge” because there’s usually only one fridge in a house, and I mean that one.

I used the apples to make some pies.

I say “the apples” because we were just talking about apples, and I mean those apples.

When we want to use a definite article with a *plural* noun, we still use “the”.

The **indefinite articles** (a, an) are used when referring to any *singular* noun. If the word right after the article begins with a consonant sound, the article used is “a”, but if the word following begins with a vowel sound, the article “an” is used. If I use a sentence with a definite article, I don’t mean any particular thing. This may be because I don’t expect you to know what I’m talking about already, or I’m talking about something in general. The words “a” and “an” can also mean “one”.

**Examples:** Please bring me a newspaper.

I say “a newspaper” because it doesn’t matter which newspaper you bring me.

I say “a” instead of “an” because “newspaper” starts with a consonant sound.

There’s a rotten apple in our fridge.

I say “a rotten apple” because I don’t think you know what apple I mean.

An apple has seeds inside it.

I say “an apple” because I’m talking about apples in general. Any apple will have seeds inside it.

I say “an” instead of “a” because “apple” starts with a vowel sound.



I'll meet you in an hour.

I say "an hour" because I mean *one hour*.

I say "an" instead of "a" because "hour" starts with a vowel sound (even though it starts with a consonant letter!).

When we use an indefinite article with a plural noun, we don't use any article:

Apples have seeds inside them.

## EXERCISES:

A. Circle the **indefinite** articles and underline the **definite** articles.

### Example:

I saw (a) young man on the freeway driving (an) old car.

- 1) Did you see an old lady by the lake?
- 2) The bowl of soup was spilled over one of the customers sitting at a little table by the window.
- 3) An orange and a banana were found at the scene of the crime.
- 4) At the time of her wedding, she wore an old pair of gloves, a new pair of shoes, the necklace belonging to her grandmother, and a blue orchid in her hair.

B. Fill in each blank with **a** or **an**.

### Example:

  a   true friend

- 1)        brilliant idea
- 2)        honest politician
- 3)        unique opportunity
- 4)        open door

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## SOLUTIONS

- A. 1) (an) old, the lake 2) The bowl, the customers, (a) little, the window  
3) (An) orange, (a) banana, the scene, the crime 4) the time, (an) old, (a) new, the necklace, a blue
- B. 1) a 2) an 3) a 4) an

