

Articles

Articles can be indefinite (**A, AN**) or definite (**THE**).

They come directly before the noun (person, place, or thing) or before the adjective modifying the noun.

The indefinite article (A, AN) is always singular.

- It is only used if the noun is **countable** (things that can be counted.)
- It refers to a noun that is general or nonspecific. It could be any person, place or thing. We do not know which one.
- It is used to refer to the first mention of a nonspecific noun in a series of sentences (a paragraph).

A dog wandered into my yard this morning. We do not know which dog. It could be any dog.

The dog was wearing a red collar. We now know exactly which dog we are referring to.

- **A / AN** is determined by the initial letter of the noun or by pronunciation.
- **A** is used before a noun beginning with a consonant.
A man A horse A house
- **AN** is used before a noun beginning with a vowel.
An apple An offer An effort

Exception 1: Words beginning with a long **U** vowel.

A university A unicorn A union

Exception 2: Words in which the initial consonant is not pronounced.

An hour An honest man An honour

The definite article (THE) can be plural or singular.

- It refers to a specific person, place, or thing - something with which both the speaker (writer) and the listener (reader) are familiar.

The sun The moon The earth rotates around the sun.

- **THE** is used if the item is local and, therefore, known to both speaker and listener.
Turn down the television. The television is visible to both.
After class, Jake is going to the lake. The lake is local, the only one in the area.

- **THE** is used if the noun is made specific by the context of the sentence.
The dog that lives next door is very noisy. This is not just any dog or all dogs but the one next door.
- **The** is used for adjectives that refer to a specific group.
The rich The poor
- **THE** refers to the second mention of a noun in a series of sentences.
A violent storm passed through town last night. The storm caused serious flooding.
- A noun that is followed by **of** usually (but not always) requires **THE**.
The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.
The students of B.U. are proud of their university.

Exception: *One of many.* One is nonspecific. We do not know which one.

- The superlative form of adjectives and adverbs requires **THE**.
The best solution The shortest person The smartest student

No article required

- Non-specific plurals:
Dogs are good companions.
- Countries, cities and streets:
Sherbrooke is a small city in Canada.
- Proper nouns:
John, Charlotte, King Charles, Prime Minister Trudeau
- Noncount: Cannot be expressed in the plural.
Water, salt, hair, people

Water is necessary to life.
The bottles of water are on the counter.
Laughter is contagious.
The laughter of the children brightened the day.
- Concepts / abstractions: Freedom, research, information, disease
Beauty is fleeting. Wisdom is eternal.

