

## Articles

There are two articles in English  
The indefinite article "A" or "AN"  
The definite article "The"

### 1. The indefinite article:

1. **A-** is used before words beginning with a consonant.  
E.g., a book, a table, a chair, a student
2. **An-** is used before words beginning with a vowel sound or with a letter h which is not sounded
  - (i) E.g., an apple, an egg, an inkstand, an orange, an umbrella
  - (ii) silent "H" – an is used before these words: heir, heiress, heirloom, honest, honesty, honorarium, honorary, honour, honourable, honoured, hour, hourly.  
E.g., an hour, an honour but a hotel, a house, a hare, a hostel, etc.,
3. **A-** must be used before words which begin with a vowel symbol pronounced with the same sound as the y in yet.  
E.g., Europe, European, uniform, union, unique, Unitarian, united, universal, university, usual;  
a useful thing, a university, a European.
4. **An M.A., an M.sc, an M.com, an M.B.A, an M.C.A, an M.B.B.S, an M.L.A., an N.C.C.** Officer but a one-way traffic.
5. **"a" or "an"** must be used before a singular noun standing for things that can be counted.  
E.g., India is a country  
London is a city
6. **A or an** must be used before the names of professions.  
Her father is a doctor.  
He is an engineer.
7. Words like hero, genius, fool, thief, and liar take the indefinite article.  
Beware of that fellow; he is a liar.  
My friend is a genius.
8. Such + a/ an + noun or  
Such + a/an + adjective + noun.  
Such a thing.  
Such a person.
9. So + adjective + a/ an + noun  
So interesting a person  
So nice an opportunity
10. Few and little are negative in meaning.  
**A few** and **a little** are positive and mean "some".  
He has little knowledge of this subject.  
He has few friends.
11. In its original numerical sense of one; as,  
Not a word was said.  
Twelve inches make a foot
12. **A, an** = one thing or person.  
Lakshmi works in a bank.  
Can I ask a question?
13. We use **a/ an** when we say what a thing or a person is for. For example  
The sun is a star.  
A mouse is an animal.

14. We use **a/ an** for jobs, etc.,  
I am a dentist.  
He is a teacher.

## 2. The definite article (The)

The is used before:

1. The superlative degree: the best, the tallest, the least.
2. The names of;
  - (I) Rivers : The Ganges
  - (II) Seas : The Arabian sea
  - (III) Oceans : The pacific ocean
  - (IV) Bays : The bay of Bengal
  - (V) Trains : The Raj dhani express
  - (VI) Banks : The state bank of India
  - (VII) Ships : The queen Elizabeth is a famous British liner.
3. The words King and Queen:  
The king of France  
But **the** is not used before the words King and Queen if they are followed by the name of the king or queen.  
King George  
Queen Elizabeth
4. Do not put **the** before the names of games  
I play football
5. Put **the** before the names of musical instruments.  
She plays the guitar
6. Do not put **the** before the names of single mountains or hills.  
Mt. Everest, Nanga Parbat,  
But **the** must be put the names of mountain ranges or ranges of hills.  
The Himalayas, The alps, The blue mountains.
7. Use "**the**" with ordinals; as,  
The first, the second, the third, the ninth, etc.,  
He was the first man to arrive
8. Do not put **the** before the names of meals if they refer to the meals generally, as a part of the daily routine:  
I have breakfast at eight every morning.  
When do you have dinner?  
But **the** must be used when the meal is a particular one, thought of as a social function. The dinner will be held at the grand hotel.
9. We say all day, all night, but all the morning, all the afternoon, all the evening, all the week.
10. Use **the** before the names of municipal or government departments and before the names of shops, business houses, industrial concerns, banks, etc., except when they begin with a personal noun.  
E.g., The Ministry of education, the Public Library, the Grand hotel, The state bank of India, but Lloyds's bank, smith's Picture Gallery.
11. Do not use **the** before the names of railway stations when they are also place names.  
Erode, Chennai, Coimbatore
12. Language inhabitants  
English **the** English  
French **the** French  
We are learning English

The English have been a sea-faring people for many centuries.

13. **The** may be used before a name which ends in road, but it may also be omitted.

E.g., he lives in Gandhiji road.

14. Purpose for which the building exists

visit or inspection

Go to school

Go to **the** school

Go to church, temple, mosque, etc.,

Go to **the** church, temple, mosque, etc.,

When **the** is omitted, the reference is to the purpose for which the building exists.

Students go to school to study.

With " **the**" the reference is merely to the building. It is visit or inspection that is referred to, not the actual purpose.

He went to the school to see the headmaster

15. Do not put **the** before the names of substances if they are used in a general sense.

Gold is a precious metal.

But **the** must be used if the reference is to a particular kind or specimen of the substance.

The gold mined here is of poor quality.

16. Do not put **the** before plural nouns when they are used in a general or a universal sense.

Aero planes can fly very fast.

17. Do not use **the** before the names of countries unless the name suggests that the country is made up of smaller units or constituents parts.

India, china, Japan, France.

But the united states of America, The UK, etc.,

18. **The** is used before a singular noun to express what we call " the generic singular", i.e. the one thing mentioned is taken to represent all of that kind.

the tiger and the cat belong to the same family of animals.

An exception to the above rule is the noun **man** when it is used to denote the human race as a whole.

Man does not live by bread alone.

19. **The** is used before common nouns which are names of things unique of their kind.

the sun, the moon, the sky, the earth

20. **The** is used before an adjective when the noun is understood.

The rich must help the poor

21. **The** is also used as an adverb with comparatives

The more you study, the more you learn