

# Use of Articles

(A, An, The & Zero)

By

**Dr. Sudesh B. Bhowate**

Head, Dept. Of English

Dr. M.W. P.W.S. Arts and Commerce College, Nagpur-26

# Articles

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graph TD; A([Articles]) --> B([Definite Article  
"The"  
the Book, the table]); A --> C([Indefinite Articles  
"A/An"  
a book / an eye]); A --> D[Sometimes nouns require no articles .  
This is called Zero article.  
"Books, Eyes"];
```

**Definite Article**  
**"The"**  
the Book, the table

**Indefinite Articles**  
**"A/An"**  
a book / an eye

**Sometimes nouns require no articles .**  
**This is called Zero article.**  
**"Books, Eyes"**

**The** has a *definite* meaning. That is *the* is used when it is clearly understood who or what is meant.

**A (or an )** is used when the person or thing is not specified; it leaved *indefinite* the person or thing spoken about.

- ❖ **a/an** often means “any”, “not any particular one”
- ❖ **While the** indicates “the one you and I know about”, the one already mentioned.

**For Example:**

**Give me the pen.** [ = some particular pen]

**Give me a pen.** [ = any pen]

# Zero Articles

Zero articles (i.e. no articles at all) or unstressed *some* /s ə m/ is used to express indefinite meaning of plural count nouns and of mass nouns.

Plural count nouns: (some) books, (some) children, (some) exams

Mass Nouns: (some) gold, (some) knowledge, (some) milk

## About Pronunciation of Articles

➤ The unstressed definite article is always written *the*, but pronounced /ðə/ before consonants and /ði/ before vowels.

/ðə/ : the car, the Pilot

/ði/ : the egg, the idea

➤ The indefinite article is a / ə / before consonants and an / ən / before vowel s: a / ə / a car, a pilot BUT / ən / an egg, an idea.

It is pronunciations, not the spelling that determines the choice of the indefinite articles:

a UN / ə ju: èn/

An X-Ray / ən èksrei /

An hour, an heir [Both nouns beginning with silent h]



## Uses of the Definite Article “THE”

**If your teacher says:**

- ▶ **The boy on your left is dull.** [you know which particular boy]
- ▶ **Close the door.** [you know which door he means]

**If you say:**

- ▶ **How do you like the film?** ( your friend knows which film you mean)
- ▶ **Let's go to the park.** ( your friend knows which park you referring to)

**In our house we may talk about:**

- ▶ **The floor, the kitchen, the bathroom, the dinning room, etc.**

## Unique Use of *The*

When the object or group of objects is the only one that exists ( or has Existed):

The Stars, the Earth, the World, the North-pole, the Equator, the human race, etc

For Exa:

The North pole and the South pole are equally distant from the equator.

The unique use of *the* also arises where what is referred to is 'understood' to be unique in the context:

The Sun, The Moon, The kitchen, The Town-hall, The Queen, The last President, etc.

## Back Pointing Use of *The*

When identity has been established by an earlier mention ( Often with an indefinite article):

Example 1:

Which bus? which Lamp-post?  
Means Indefinite

The bus =the bus I've just spoken about  
The lamp-post= I've just mentioned  
Means definite

**A bus hit a lamp-post. The bus was damaged and the lamp-post bent.**

**Luckily the people in the bus had no serious injuries.**

“in the bus” makes it clear  
which people I mean

## Example 2:

First Mention

They have a son and two daughters, but the son is already grown up and has a family of his own.

Second Mention

## Forward-pointing Use of *The*

**When identity is established by a modifier, such as a relative clause or an of-phrase that follow the noun:**

### **For Example:**

The woman who answered the door helped Jack into the room.

The wine of France is the best in the world.

The discovery of radium marked the beginning of a new era of medicine.

## Conventional Use of *The* ( For Institutions, etc)

**When reference is made to an institution shared by the community:**

The radio, the television, the telephone, the newspaper, the paper, the paper, the train, etc.

**In Sentences like:**

I read in the paper the next day that he'd been killed by burglars.  
Maybe we'll go to New Delhi this week by the train

**Note:**

**After a preposition, *the* is used before parts of the body in constructions like these**

She looked him in the eye and said no  
Ravi smiled and shook me by the hand

## Generic use of Articles

*The* also has a generic use, referring to what is general or typical for a whole class of objects. This is found with count nouns:

*The tiger* is one of the big cats; it is rivaled only *by the* lion in strength and ferocity. *The tiger* has no mane, but in old males *the hair* on the cheeks are long and spreading.

Here the tiger indicates → tigers in general → not one individual

Tigers have no mane ( it is the generic use of the indefinite plural form)

A tiger has no mane ( it is the generic use of the indefinite singular)

We can say:

The tiger is in danger of becoming extinct.

Tigers are in danger of becoming extinct.



Generic use

## Specific Vs generic

### Specific Use

- Pass the butter, please
- The acting was poor, but we enjoyed the music.
- Before you visit Spain, you ought to learn the language.
- Come and look at the horses.

### Generic Use

- Butter is expensive now a days.
- Dancing and music were his hobbies.
- The scientific study of language is called linguistics.
- “I just love horses”, says Murphy

❖ English tends to treat mass nouns and plural nouns as generic when they have a modifier before them. But when they are followed by a modifier, especially by an of-phrase , “the” normally has to be present :

Chinese history

The history of China

American social life

The social life of America

Early medieval architecture

The architecture of the early  
medieval period

Animal behavior

The behavior of animals

❖ “The” use Before superlatives : the best, the biggest, the smallest ,etc.

And ordinals: the first, the sixth, etc,

For example; she is the tallest in the class.

## Adjectives are used with generic “the”:

1. To denote class of people ( the poor, the unemployed, the young, the handicap, etc)

for example: We must care for the elderly, the unemployed, the homeless, the sick, and the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable.

2. To denote an abstract quality( the absurd, the beautiful, the sublime, etc)

For example: His behavior on the platform borders on the ridiculous.

3. With nationality adjectives ending in a sibilant -ch, -ese, -sh, or -ss used to refer to a people as a whole: the Dutch, the English, the French, the Japanese, the Vietnamese, etc.
4. With group nouns like : the middle class, the public, the administration, the government, etc

For Example: The public can help by reporting anything suspicious to the police

## Use of A / An

The indefinite article a/an really means “one”, so it can only be used with singular countable nouns; it can't be used with uncountable nouns:

1. We use a/an in the sense of “any one” or “a certain”

There is a horse in the field.

A girl came for you this morning.

2. We use a/an in the sense of “One”

Please wait a minute.

I gave him a hundred rupees note.

3. We use a/an in the sense of “each”, “every”

The cloth is twenty rupees a meter.

He goes to Hyderabad twice a month.

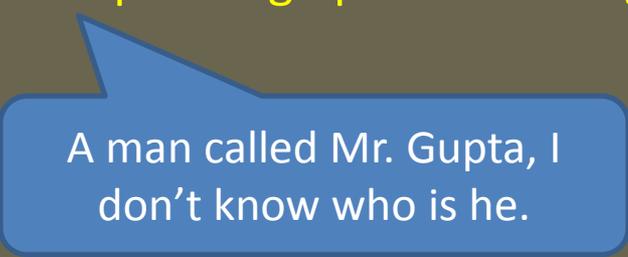
4. We use a/an to say that a person is a member of a particular class or group, or when we say what people are like:

My uncle is a doctor.

Ramesh is a brilliant student.

5. Usually names of people takes no articles. However, a/an may be used before a personal name as in following sentences;

A Mr. Gupta rang up this morning.



A man called Mr. Gupta, I don't know who is he.

6. Unlike many other languages, English requires an article with singular count nouns as complements.

a. With indefinite reference, indefinite article is used.

Hema always wanted to be a scientist.

b. With certain verbs e.g. consider, the complement follows the object or the passive:

Everybody considered Mr. Chavhan (to be) an excellent music teacher.

Mr. Chavhan is considered(to be) an excellent music teacher

c. With verbs e.g. regard, the complement follows:

Many people regarded her as a Goddess.

## Zero Article

Sometimes some exceptional groups of common nouns occur without article. This usage chiefly occurs in idiomatic expressions and certain fixed combination of words ( at night, etc):

A. Means of transport (in expressions with by)

Did you get here by train or by car.

Also: by bus, by boat, by bike, etc.

B. Times of Day and Nights:

These birds are mostly active at dawn and at dusk.

We arrived rather late at night.

Also: after day break, by sunrise, before sunset, at midnight, at twilight, at noon, etc.

C. Meals:

We were given scrambled eggs for breakfast

Natasha is having lunch with her publisher

I felt sleepy after dinner.

- D. We use no article with school, college, church, prison, and hospital when we talk about them as institutions. But we use an article if we are talking them as buildings:

### Compare

❑ School begins at ten o'clock.

➤ The school has a new building.

❑ Peter has gone to church (to pray)

➤ There is a church in that corner.

❑ The man was sent to prison for stealing motorcycles.

➤ The visitors come out of the prison.

❑ Ganesh is in hospital. He is suffering from Malaria.

➤ The hospital is a long way from here.



Fill in the blanks with a or an or the, where necessary:

1. Sri Lanka is **an** island.

2. **An** explorer must be **a** brave man.

3. Cow give us -----milk. **Zero Article**

4. Three boys, **the** -African, **the** Indian and **the** Russian went to England.

5. He is **an** M.A. in -----English. **Zero Article**

6. What is **the** exact cause of his illness.

7. There is a white tiger in - **the** zoo.

8. These are **the** benefits of long walks in open air.

9. We don't know how old --- **the** universe is.

10. Draw **a** - map of **the** world.

1. China is to-----north of India.
2. He is ----- man of many qualities
3. ----- French is ----- easy language.
4. This is ----- book I want.
5. Twelve inches make ----- foot.
6. -----Ganga is ----- the sacred river
7. He can play ----- guitar very well.
8. -----Mount Everest is ----- highest mountain in ----- world.
9. He enjoyed ----- lunch.
10. he was seriously ill, so he went to ----- hospital.



Home Work



THANK YOU