

The Indefinite Article – A / AN

We use A/AN with:

1. Singular nouns and the first time we refer to a person, animal or thing.

- a child
- an elephant
- a television

2. We don't use A/AN with possessive pronouns, demonstratives or cardinal numbers.

- My shirt is dirty.
- This car is expensive.
- One person is in the reception.

3. We use ONE (or more) instead of A/AN when the number is important.

- There is only one exit from the airport.

A is used when the next word begins with a consonant sound (b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k etc).

- a book
- a table
- a clock
- a university (because the beginning of university sounds like YOU-niversity)

AN is used when the next word begins with a vowel sound (a, e, i, o, u).

- an apple
- an elephant
- an umbrella
- an hour (because the H is silent)

The Definite Article – THE

We use THE with:

1. A singular or plural noun when it is clear/obvious which person or thing we are talking about.

- There is a lamp in my bedroom. (we mention the lamp for the first time)
- The lamp is next to the desk.

2. Anything which we identify immediately.

- We watched the new Brad Pitt movie last night.

3. Musical instruments (the violin, the guitar, the drums, the flute, the piccolo).

- She plays the piano.

4. Something that is unique or there is only one.

- the sun
- the moon
- the internet.

5. Names of rivers, seas, oceans, mountain ranges and deserts (always in capitals).

- The Mississippi River
- The Black Sea
- The Andes
- The Sahara Desert

6. Directions (cardinal points).

- the west
- the south-east
- the north-west.

ZERO Article with Plural and Uncountable Nouns

General meaning

- cars, people
- life, water

Abstract nouns

- education, happiness, music

ZERO Article with Singular Countable Nouns

- People: Mary, Bill, Josef
- Places: Jupiter, Russia, Bangkok, Heathrow Airport, Cambridge University, Waterloo Station
- Streets: Oxford Street, Wall Street, Piccadilly Circus
- Languages: English, Russian
- Academic subjects: History, Law, Physics
- Days, months: Monday, November
- Games and Sports: football, chess
- Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner
- Noun + Number: platform 3, room 7, page 44
- Routine Places: in bed, at home, to school, to work
- Movement or Transport: on foot, by car, by bus, by air
- Newspaper Headlines, Notices, User Guides: Plane Crashes On House, Keep Area Clean, Insert battery

