

Articles a – an – the

Introduction

1) Articles are words that define a noun as specific or unspecific.

*I'm **a** nurse. **The** hospital I'm working in is huge.*

2) English has two types of articles: indefinite *a/an* and definite *the*.

The indefinite article takes two forms – *a/an*. Use the indefinite article *a* when it precedes a word that begins with a consonant. Use the indefinite article *an* when it precedes a word that begins with a vowel.

a table, an umbrella, a university /ˌjuːnəˈvɜːsəti/, an honest /ˈɒnɪst/ person

The indefinite article *a* indicates that a noun refers to a general idea rather than a particular thing.

*What does **a** fox say?*

We use *a/an* when the listener does not know which person or thing we are talking about.

*Helen's brother works in **a** factory. I don't know which factory exactly.*

If we refer to something for the first time, it will be new information for the listener so we use *a/an*. When referencing to the same thing again use *the* because now the listener knows what we are talking about.

*I bought **a** new computer. It's really great! **The** computer is much better than my previous one.*

The definite article is the word *the*. It limits the meaning of a noun to one particular thing. We use *the* when it is clear which thing or person we are talking about.

***The** cake is in the fridge. I know that Kate made it.*

We use the definite article *the* with:

a) nationalities and other groups.

the French, the Italians, the old, the poor

b) time.

in the past, in the future (but at present)

c) superlatives.

You are the first one!

d) musical instruments.

I played the piano as a kid.

e) countries which are a group or plural.

the U.S., the U.K., the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands

f) names of ships.

We sailed on the Claudia.

g) oceans.

the Pacific, the Atlantic

h) rivers.

the Amazon, the Nile

Note that we use zero articles with plurals and uncountable nouns when we are generally talking about something.

Dogs are not allowed in that shop. (We are talking about dogs in general.)

The dogs next door were barking at night. (We are talking about the particular dogs.)

Short Story Dialogue

– Liz, can I get you anything?

– **A cup of coffee** would be nice. I feel extremely exhausted. I haven't thought that flying over **the Atlantic** would be **the worst trip** I've ever taken. And you know that I hate **train rides the most!**

– Well, **the flight** was delayed too so you were stuck **at the airport for a longer period of time.**

– I am just hoping that **in the near future** we'll build **a teleport.** Then traveling from **the U.S. to the Netherlands** won't take that long!

– I wish it were like that! Here is **your coffee.**

– Thank you!

Independent Practice - Articles a – an – the

1) Fill in the gaps with **a, an, the.** Sometimes no article is needed.

- dog that bit me ran away. wounds were treated by doctor. Dr. Smith is professional!
- Rabbits are small mammals in family Leporidae.
- Love is wonderful thing.
- Olivia is English teacher. She's not working at present.
- I didn't want to go to parking lot so I went home on foot. It was only 15 minute walk.

Independent Practice: Answers - Articles a – an – the

1) Fill in the gaps with *a, an, the*. Sometimes no article is needed.

- a. **The** dog that bit me ran away. **The** wounds were treated by **the** doctor. **..-..** Dr. Smith is **a** professional!
- b. **..-..** Rabbits are **..-..** small mammals in **the** family Leporidae.
- c. **..-..** Love is **a** wonderful thing.
- d. **..-..** Olivia is **an** English teacher. She's not working at **..-..** present.
- e. I didn't want to go to **the** parking lot so I went **..-..** home on **..-..** foot. It was only **a** 15 minute walk.