

The English Articles

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§ Articles are words preceding nouns, indicating gender and number. They qualify nouns, they can also be classified into two groups, “definite” and “indefinite”.

The English Article

§ *Indefinite:* In English the indefinite articles are 'a' and 'an'.



A boy



A girl



An apple

§ *Definite:* The definite article in English is 'the'.



The clock

The Indefinite Article

A - An

The Indefinite Article

§ *The indefinite article is invariable in gender and number. This means that it can be used either for masculine or feminine:*

A boy / **A** girl

§ *It has no plural form. To express plural we use “some”:*

Some boys / **some** girls

§ *“A” is used before words beginning with consonant, “h”, and before “u, eu, ew” when they are pronounced /ju:/:*

A chair / **a** useful thing

§ *“An” is used before words beginning with a vowel or an “h” which it’s not pronounced:*

An orange / **an** envelope / **an** hour

The Indefinite Article

§ *“A” and “an” are used to name persons or things:*

A man / **A** table / **An** umbrella

§ *They are used before professions:*

I am **an** engineer. / He is **a** painter.

§ *It’s also used to name an individual or an object as a representative of a class:*

A car is better than **a** motorbike. (We’re indicating that the car or motorbike, in general, represent any car or motorbike of its class)

§ *It has a distributive use:*

Twice **a** day

The Indefinite Article

§ *Before proper names preceded by titles:*

There is **a** Mr. Smith at the door.

§ *Before expressions indicating a determined quantity of things or persons:*

A lot of / **a** dozen

§ *In exclamatory phrases, before a singular noun:*

What **a** nice tie!

§ *Before words indicating measure, price, etc.; or after quantity adverbs like "such, half, etc":*

Twenty miles **a**n hour / such **a** thing / **a** few

The Indefinite Article

§ *It may accompany a proper name, becoming a common name:*

A bottle of Oporto / **A** McMillan (a member of the McMillan clan)

§ *The indefinite article is omitted:*

§ *Before plural nouns (we use **some** or **any**):*

There are **some** oranges in the fridge.

Are there **any** oranges in the fridge?

§ *In phrases indicating a philosophical sense:*

Honesty is rare.

The Definite Article

The

The Definite Article

§ *In English the definite article “the” has the peculiarity and the advantage that covers the four Spanish articles:*

The world / **The** worlds

The house / **The** houses

The cat, **the** girl, **the** books, **the** apples

§ *So we can say it's invariable in gender and number.*

§ *It designates a concrete person or thing. In this case the importance of the article is fundamental because from its presence we may know what person or thing we refer to.*

The man near the window is my father.

The Definite Article



Computers are expensive



The computers are expensive

Both phrases can be translated as “Los ordenadores son caros”. But in the first example, we decide that the computers are expensive in general (*what we want to express is that any computer can be expensive*). In the second case we’re talking about a specific group of computers. We have bought some last generation computers which price is high.

The Definite Article

§ Omission of the article “the”

§ *When we refer to persons. (The precedent treatment is applied)*

Mr. Epi / King Arthur / Lord Craig

§ *When we refer to countries or other geographic terms with proper names.*

England / Sesamo Street / New York

§ *When we refer to churches, schools, prisons, hospitals and other public places for meetings with their generic use as such.*

She goes to school / He is in the hospital (in bed)

§ *Before names of substances, colors and languages.*

Iron is hard. / Pink is a flashy color / English is an interesting language.

The Definite Article

§ Omission of the article "the"

§ *With months, seasons, weeks, years, etc. When we take the real time as reference and days of the weeks and hours.*

He came in July . / She came in spring. / On Saturday / At half past five

§ *When we talk about breakfast, lunch, snack or dinner.*

Dinner is at seven.

§ *When we talk about activities, jobs and games:*

Chess / Fishing / Architecture

§ *When we talk about percentage:*

Twenty percent

§ *When we use names of parts of the body which are used with the verb "to have"*

My daughter has blue eyes.