

APSU Writing Center
Articles (A, An, The)

Articles

Articles are short words used to signal or clarify a noun. The three articles in English are a, an, and the.

When to Use an Article

- Use an article when describing a specific noun.
- Leave it out when referring to something in general.
 - **General noun:** I like books.
 - **Specific noun:** I like the book about rabbits.

Indefinite Articles (A, An)

Indefinite articles (a, an) refer to nonspecific or general nouns, which are things that are not yet known to the reader or listener.

A

- Use **a** before words that begin with a consonant sound.
 - **Examples:** a hat, a dog, a book, a student, a university

Use A when...

- Introducing a noun.
 - **Example:** I bought **a** new laptop yesterday.
- Talking about one of many possible items.
 - **Example:** She wants to adopt **a** cat.
- Referring to a general category or type.
 - **Example:** **A** teacher must be patient.

APSU Writing Center
Articles (A, An, The)

An

- Use an before words that begin with a vowel sound (or words with a silent h).
 - **Examples:** an apple, an hour, an honest man, an idea

Use An when...

- Introducing a new noun starting with a vowel sound.
 - **Example:** She saw **an** elephant at the zoo.
- Referring to a general, singular noun starting with a vowel sound.
 - **Example:** **An** education is important for success.

Definite Article (The)

The is used to describe a specific noun. It clarifies which person, place, or thing you mean and removes ambiguity.

Use The when...

- Both singular and plural nouns are present.
 - **Example:** The cats are sleeping.
 - **Example:** The mouse ate some cheese.
- Referring to a noun already introduced.
 - **Example:** I have two cats, a gray female and a white male.
 - **Example:** I found the gray female as a stray two years ago.