**Articles**

There are only three articles in English: ***a, an*** and ***the***. There are two *types* of articles ***indefinite 'a****'* and '***an'*** or ***definite 'the'****.* You also need to know when not to use an article. Their proper use is complex, especially when you get into the advanced use of English.

**Indefinite articles - a and an**

**A** and **an** are the indefinite articles. They refer to something not specifically known to the person you are communicating with.

**A** and **an** are used before nouns that introduce something or someone you have not mentioned before:-

*Examples:* "I saw ***an*** elephant this morning."   
"I ate ***a*** banana for lunch."

**A** and **an** are also used when talking about your profession

*Example*s: "I am ***an*** English teacher."   
"I am ***a*** builder."

* You use ***a*** when the noun you are referring to begins with a consonant (b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y or z), for example, "**a** city", "**a** factory", and "a hotel".
* You use ***an*** when the noun you are referring to begins with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) Pronunciation changes this rule. It's the sound that matters, not the spelling.   
  ***Examples:***

We say "university" with a "y" sound at the beginning as though it were spelt "*you*niversity".  
So, "**a** university" IS correct.

* We say "hour" with a silent h as though it were spelt "our".  
  So, "**an** hour" IS correctWe say "hour" with a silent h as though it were spelt "our".  
  So, "**an** hour" IS correct.

### Definite Article - the

##### You use the when you know that the listener knows or can work out what particular person/thing you are talking about.

*Example*s: "**The** apple you ate was rotten." "Did you lock **the** car?"

* You should also use ***the*** when you have already mentioned the thing you are talking about.

*Example*s: "She's got two children; **a** girl and **a** boy. **The** girl's eight and **the** boy's fourteen."

* We use **the** to talk about geographical points on the globe.

|  |
| --- |
| *For example***: the** North Pole, **the** equator |
| *For example* **: the** Nile, **the** Pacific, **the** English channel |

We also use **the** before certain nouns when we know there is only one of a particular thing.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | * *For example***: the** rain, **the** sun, **the** wind, **the** world, **the** earth, **the** universe, **the** White House What is **the** longest river in the world? Paris is **the** capital of France, Everybody left at **the** end of the meeting. |

However if you want to describe a particular instance of these you should use a/an.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| : | *For example* :"I could hear **the** wind." / "There's **a** cold wind blowing." "What are your plans for **the** future?" / "She has **a** promising future ahead of her." |

### No article

We usually use no article to talk about things in general:-

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **People** are worried about rising crime. (Note! People generally, so no article) |

You do not use an article when talking about sports.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| : | *For example* My son plays **football.**  **Tennis** is expensive. |

You do not use an article before uncountable nouns when talking about them generally.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| : | *For example* **Information** is important to any organisation.  **Coffee** is bad for you. |

You do not use an article before the names of countries ***except*** where they indicate multiple areas or contain the words (state(s), kindom, republic, union). Kingdom, state, republic and union are nouns, so they need an article.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Note**: | *For example* Italy, Mexico, Bolivia, England  Use the - **the** UK (United Kingdom), **the** USA (United States of America), **the** Irish Republic  Multiple areas : **the** Netherlands, **the** Philippines, **the** British Isles |