

# LESSON 12

## *Articles*

Articles are small but important words. They are of two kinds: 'a/an' and 'the'.

The articles 'a/an' is called an indefinite article because it leaves indefinite the person or object it defines. The article 'the' is called a definite article because it refers to a specific object or person.

A doctor – any doctor

The doctor – a particular or specific doctor.

**Look at these sentences.**

I will meet you under a tree.

I will meet you under the tree.

'A tree' refers to any tree. But 'the tree' refers to a particular tree that the speakers know about.

Did you bring a magazine? (any magazine)

Did you bring the magazine? (a particular magazine)

### The indefinite article 'a/an'

'a/an' is called an indefinite article and it is usually used before singular, countable nouns:

A book	An apple
A dog	An egg
A cap	An ice cream
A box	An orange
A lion	An umbrella

#### The difference between the use of 'a' and 'an':

The English alphabet has 26 letters beginning with a, b, c and ending with x, y, z. The alphabet is a group of letters that exists in any language. The Hindi alphabet has its own letters. The English alphabet has 26 letters. We refer to each one of them as letters and to the whole group as the alphabet. If a word begins with a vowel sound we use 'an' before it and if it begins with a consonant sound then we use 'a' before it.

Now practice using a/an.

a table, a hat, a cow, an owl, an aeroplane, a kite, a gate, an inkpot, an umbrella, a fan, a bed, a horse, an hour, an elephant, a nest.

**Note:** There is a difference between the written letter and its pronunciation. For example you may write 'hour' but when this word is spoken, we pronounce it as 'aar', as the 'h' is silent



Look at these examples:

umbrella, uniform

an umbrella, a uniform

Even though both words begin with the letter 'u', we use 'an' before the word 'umbrella' because the first sound of this word is a vowel. In the word 'uniform' the first sound is a consonant i.e., 'y'. So we use 'a' before it.

In the word 'umbrella', u has the sound of a vowel 'a'. In the word 'uniform', u has the sound of a consonant 'y'.

We also say 'a' one rupee note, 'a' one-eyed cat.

We use 'a' because the word 'one', begins with the sound of the consonant 'w' even though the letter 'o' is a vowel.

### Exercise 1

Fill in the blanks with a/an.

1. Iron is \_\_\_\_\_ useful metal.
2. He is not \_\_\_\_\_ honourable man.
3. Mumbai is \_\_\_\_\_ big city.
4. Mary had \_\_\_\_\_ little lamb.
5. I first met him \_\_\_\_\_ year ago.
6. Yesterday \_\_\_\_\_ European called at my office.
7. Sanskrit is \_\_\_\_\_ difficult language.
8. If you see him, give him \_\_\_\_\_ message.
9. Andaman is \_\_\_\_\_ island.
10. She is \_\_\_\_\_ untidy girl.

### Answers to Exercise 1

1. a
2. an
3. a
4. a



5. an
6. a
7. a
8. a
9. an
10. an

## The definite article 'the'

'The' is called a definite article because it makes particular or definite the object it refers to. The definite article 'the' is used in the following situations:

### Buildings and monuments

The Taj Mahal is grand.

The Gateway of India is in Mumbai.

### To refer to a species

The cat loves comfort.

The rose is a beautiful flower.

The cow is a useful animal.

**Note:** In the sentence, 'The cat that attacked you is very dangerous', 'the cat' implies a particular cat.

In the sentence, 'The cat loves comfort' we are referring to the cat species and it can mean any cat.

### Before some special nouns

Though the is not used before a proper noun, there are certain proper nouns before which we do use it. For example, before the names of oceans and seas, mountain ranges, rivers, deserts and islands.

1. Oceans and seas — 'The Indian Ocean, The Arabian sea'.
2. Rivers— The Ganga, The Yamuna.
3. Deserts— The Thar, The Sahara.
4. Islands— The West Indies, The Philippines
5. Mountains— The Himalayas, The Alps.

'The' is not used before the name of single a mountain, though it is used before names of mountain ranges. For example, it would be wrong to say 'the Mont Blanc' or 'the Nanda Devi'.

### Before names of certain books

The Vedas, The Bible.



### **Before names of things unique of their kind**

the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, the star.

### **With superlatives**

the best book, the tallest girl, the biggest airport.

### **With ordinal numbers**

The first man on the moon was an American.

The fourth chapter is simple.

### **Before musical instruments**

the tabla, the flute.

### **Before adjectives used as nouns**

the poor, the weak, the rich

### **Other nouns before which we use 'the' are:**

the police/ the army

the North/ the West/ the East

the cinema/ the bank

### **Some situations in which 'the' is not used**

- breakfast, lunch, dinner.

I ate bread for breakfast.(however, specific meals are referred to using 'the').

The dinner will be held at the Grand Hotel.

- next week/last month.

I'm not working next week.

- go to ..... Work/school/bed.

I'm going to work. I go to bed at 8.30.

- for general ideas.

I like music. We don't eat eggs.

## **Exercise 2**

Here is a short story in which the writer forgot to put the articles. Try and put in the right article. Good luck!

Here is \_\_\_\_\_ interesting story for you. \_\_\_\_\_ boy sat weeping on \_\_\_\_\_ side of \_\_\_\_\_ well. \_\_\_\_\_ thief happened to pass by at \_\_\_\_\_ same time. He asked \_\_\_\_\_ boy why he was weeping. \_\_\_\_\_ boy, sobbing bitterly, showed him \_\_\_\_\_ piece of rope and said that it had \_\_\_\_\_ large box at \_\_\_\_\_ end. \_\_\_\_\_ box, full of silver coins, had fallen into \_\_\_\_\_ well. \_\_\_\_\_ thief at once pulled off his clothes and jumped into --- well. But he did not find anything at \_\_\_\_\_ bottom of \_\_\_\_\_ well. When he came out, he found not only \_\_\_\_\_ boy but his clothes also gone.



## Countable and Uncountable/mass nouns

There are certain objects that are countable. e.g. pencils, bags, books, chairs, doors etc.

We can ask how many pencils, bags, etc. But we cannot ask how many energy? This is because energy levels cannot be counted, but pencils and bags can be counted.

If a noun is countable we can use 'a' or 'an' before it.

Examples:

a pencil, a bag, an ant.

**Note:** A countable noun has a plural form and can answer to the question, how many?

Examples:

How many rooms does this house have?

How many pencils do you have?

**Note:** with countable nouns we can use numbers.

Examples:

One girl

Five shirts

Six horses

**Note:** If a noun is uncountable we do not usually use 'a' or 'an' before it.

Examples:

Sugar is sweet.

Water is scarce.

**Note:** An uncountable noun does not usually have a plural and can be used to answer the question– How much? It cannot answer the question– How many? We cannot use numbers with these nouns. Instead we can refer to quantity by using the words — some, a little, a cup of, a spoon of, a sheaf of, a piece of etc.

Some more uncountable nouns are — baggage, furniture, information.

Examples:

Give me some water.

I need a little flour and a spoon of sugar.

Exception: Two coffees, please.

(In the above request, 'two cups of coffee' is implied)



### Exercise 3

Fill in the blanks in Column A with the word denoting measurement from Column B:

COLUMN A

COLUMN B

A _____ of matches	bowl
A _____ of coffee	glass
A _____ of soup	box
A _____ of juice	cup
A _____ of jam	jar
A _____ of bread	piece
A _____ of chocolate	slice
A _____ of toast	five litres
_____ of butter	two meters
_____ of petrol	tube
_____ of cloth	ten grams
A _____ of toothpaste	bar

### Answers to Exercise 2

Here is an interesting story for you. A boy sat weeping on the side of a well. A thief happened to pass by at the same time. He asked the boy why he was weeping. The boy, sobbing bitterly, showed him a piece of rope and said that it had a large box at the end. The box, full of silver coins, had fallen into the well. The thief at once pulled off his clothes and jumped into the well. But he did not find anything at the bottom of the well. When he came out, he found not only the boy but his clothes also gone.

### Answers to Exercise 3

A _____ of matches	box
A _____ of coffee	cup
A _____ of soup	bowl
A _____ of juice	glass
A _____ of jam	jar
A _____ of bread	slice
A _____ of chocolate	bar
A _____ of toast	piece
_____ of butter	ten grams
_____ of petrol	five litres
_____ of cloth	two meters
A _____ of toothpaste	tube