

USE OF ARTICLES

One of the most confusing parts of English grammar for many non-native speakers is the use of articles. In English, articles are used to modify nouns in certain situations; they are not used before every noun. There are two types of articles: indefinite (a, an) and definite (the). Indefinite articles are used when the speaker or writer is talking about a non-specific member of a group, while a definite article is used for a specific member(s) of a group.

Note: The following rules for choosing articles apply to both speaking and writing, so any mention of a speaker could also apply to a writer.

Indefinite Articles (A/An)

Indefinite articles are used when a speaker is talking about a non-specific noun that could be any member of a group. An indefinite article can only modify a singular count noun. A count noun is any noun that can be counted, such as the noun "table" (How many tables are there?) or "baby" (How many babies are there?). Noncount nouns are nouns that cannot be counted, such as "rice" or "courage." (How many rices/courages are there? are nonsensical questions.)

A: Use a to modify a non-specific, singular count noun that begins with a consonant sound. In addition to consonants, this includes words that begin with the following sounds: "yoo" (IPA: [ju:]) as in the words "user" or "European" and "wo" (IPA: [wA]) as in the word "one."

A couple of examples are given below:

o **A raindrop fell from the sky.** (One raindrop fell, and whichever one it was out of the whole group of raindrops does not matter.)

o **That novel has a one-dimensional heroine.** ("One-dimensional" begins with a "wo" sound [wA]), and the noun being modified is singular and could be any member of the group of heroines.)

o **A user can access his account with the password.** ("User" begins with the "yoo" sound [ju:], and the noun being modified is singular and could be any member of the group of users)

A can also be used to make generalizations, as in the following examples:

o **A pen is a writing utensil.** (This is a general statement about any and all pens.)

o **A dog is a common household pet.** (This is a general statement about any and all dogs.)

An: Use an to modify a non-specific, singular count noun that begins with a vowel sound. This includes vowels as well as words that begin with a silent h as in "herb" or "honor."

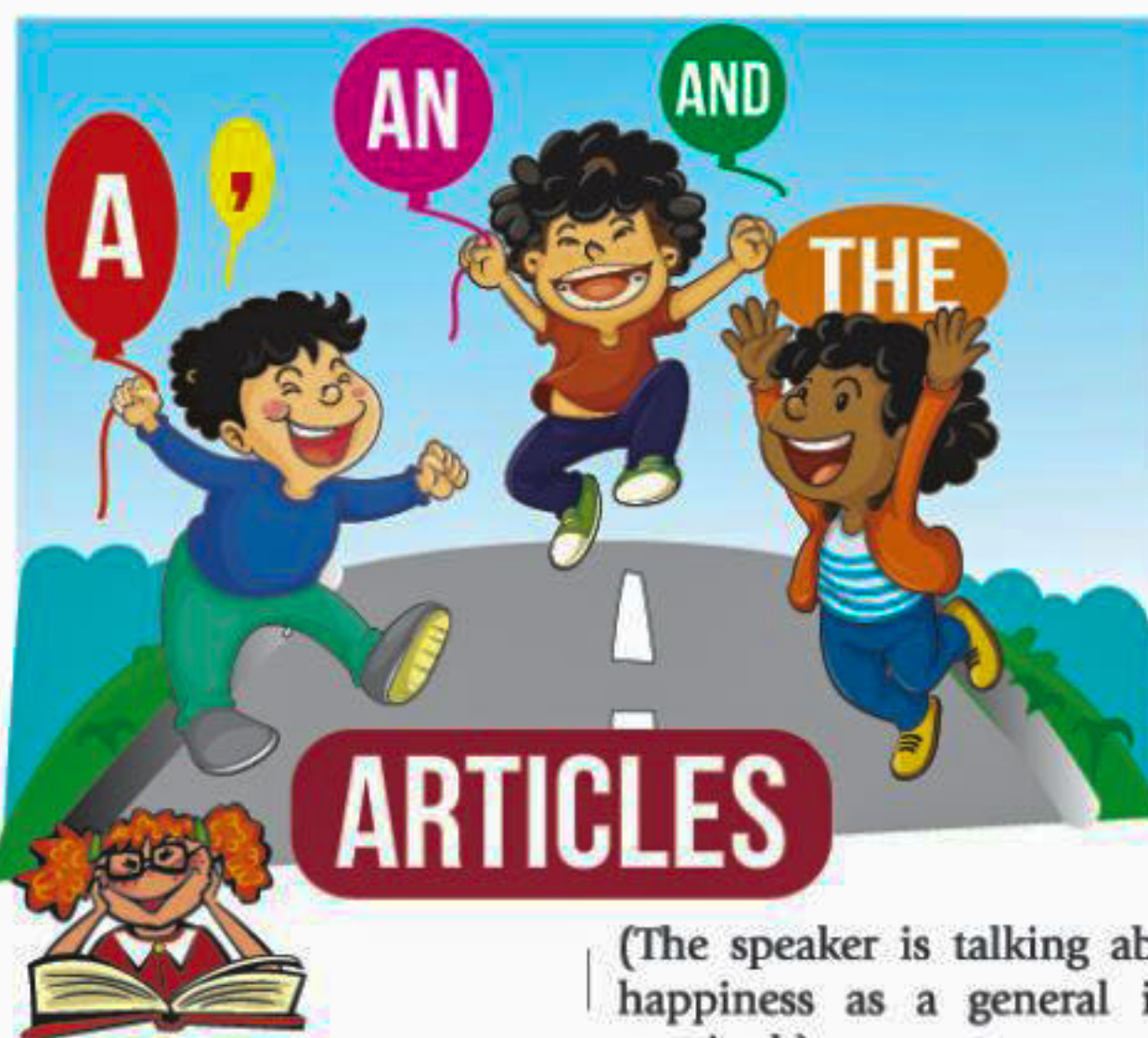
Below are a couple of examples:

o **An elephant escaped from the zoo.** ("Elephant" is a singular, non-specific count noun that begins with a vowel.)

o **He planted an herb garden in his yard.** ("Herb" begins with a silent h and is a singular, non-specific count noun.)

Definite Articles (The)

A definite article is used when a speaker is talking about a specific member of a group. The noun being modified can be either singular or plural, as well as count or noncount. Unlike indefinite articles, a definite article is used only when the noun is known to both the speaker and the listener.



Below are a few examples:

o The dishes need to be washed. (The speaker is talking about a particular group of dishes that is a specific part of the group of all dishes.)

o Her piano is in the living room. (The speaker is talking about a particular living room which is a specific member of the group of all living rooms.)

o The happiness of others is important to him.

(The speaker is talking about a specific happiness, not happiness as a general idea, so a definite article is required.)

Note: If a/an has been used with a noun when it is first mentioned, the article changes to the when the same noun is mentioned later.

o **The local newspaper printed an article about pet health yesterday. The article discussed how to protect dogs from ticks.**

No Article

Certain nouns require neither an indefinite nor definite article before them. Here are a few of the most common guidelines:

- ★ When making generalizations with plural nouns, no article is used.
- ★ Peaches grow on trees. (This is a general statement about peaches, which is a plural count noun.)
- ★ No article is needed before abstract nouns.
- ★ Education is important. (The speaker is talking about the abstract concept of education which is something that can only be thought of and not physically sensed.)
- ★ Most proper nouns do not need an article.
- ★ Brazil is the largest country in South America. (Country and continent names are proper nouns that do not need an article before them.)

o She can speak Spanish and French. (Language names are also proper nouns that do not need an article.)

Exceptions. Although most proper nouns do not need an article, there are several exceptions to this rule. Some examples of the most common types of exceptions are given below:

Dutch is the official language of the Netherlands. (Use a definite article before the name of a country or geographical location if the name suggests that it contains separate regions or areas.)

The climate is warmer in the South. (Use a definite article before the name of a specific region or area.)

The Pacific Ocean is the largest ocean in the world. (A definite article is needed before the names of oceans, as well as deserts and rivers.)

The University of Pennsylvania is a strong research institution. (A definite article is used before college and university names when "university" or "college" is the first word in the name.)

The Natural History Museum is located in Washington, D.C. (Use a definite article before the names of museums and libraries.)

ARTICLE DRILL 1

Fill in: The, a, an or --- (leave blank)

- I have just had _____ great idea.
- Columbus was one of _____ first people to cross _____ Atlantic.
- _____ British drink too much tea.
- _____ Thames flows into _____ North Sea.
- Judith earns € 2000 _____ month.
- Dancing is _____ more interesting activity than reading.
- As _____ captain of _____ ship I have _____ complete authority.
- _____ people we met on _____ holiday in _____ north of England came from _____ USA.
- What's on _____ TV today?
- He was doing eighty miles _____ hour on _____ motorway.

ARTICLE DRILL 2

Fill in the correct article (A, AN or THE) where necessary – or leave blank !

- _____ modern life is stressful.
- What's _____ capital of your country?
- _____ doctor earns more than _____ teacher.
- Do you know who invented _____ computer ?
- Have you seen _____ newspaper? I can't find it anywhere.
- Is this _____ first time you've stayed at _____ Hilton ?
- Is _____ Nile or _____ Amazon _____ longest river on _____ earth ?
- Several million visitors _____ year are attracted to _____ ski slopes of _____ Alps.
- I'll meet you outside _____ post office. I'll be there in _____ quarter of _____ hour.
- _____ young people tend to think that _____ life was more difficult in _____ past.

Find the answers in next MONDAY issue

ANSWER KEY TO THE LAST EIS PAGE ACTIVITIES (DATED SEPTEMBER 26, 2016)

TRUE / FALSE:
a.T b.F c.F d.F e.T f.T g.F h.T

SYNONYM MATCH:
a. embark commence b. reliance dependence c. slash cut d. estimates reckons e. capturing securing f. reiterated repeated g. novelty newness h. tour of duty posting i. half-hearted lukewarm j. dabble dilly-dally

PHRASE MATCH:
a. a five-fold increase in the number of jobs moved overseas
b. centers worldwide will help slash staffing costs c. their global headcount shifted to offshore bases d. the tripling of personnel cost savings to \$16 billion e. capturing less than a third of the potential cost savings f. mistakenly been regarded as a short-term strategy g. experiencing a sharp drop-off in cost savings h. experience 'offshore fatigue', as the initial novelty wears off i. tour of duty j. make a half-hearted attempt at offshoring

WORD ORDER:
Outsourcing on the increase
Financial firms worldwide are set to embark on a five-fold increase in the number of jobs moved overseas, according to a new report from the accounting company Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu. This increased reliance on outsourcing, or offshoring, to low-cost centers worldwide will help slash staffing costs for the major international players. Some companies will see up to seven percent of their global headcount shifted to offshore bases. This means two million financial services jobs in IT, HR and call centers will be based offshore by 2010. The good news for investors is the tripling of personnel cost savings to \$16 billion. The accounting giant estimates that many financial firms are currently capturing less than a third of the potential cost savings offered by outsourcing. Deloitte says outsourcing has generally and mistakenly been regarded as a short-term strategy, with many companies experiencing a sharp drop-off in cost savings after several years. The report reiterated that: "Offshoring is not a straightforward cost savings tactic. Many organizations are beginning to experience 'offshore fatigue', as the initial novelty wears off and the original operational managers return from their 'tour of duty'. The advice from Deloitte director Chris Gentle was to stay for the long course. He said: "Financial institutions that make a half-hearted attempt at offshoring are exposed to all of the risk, while enjoying only some of the benefits. The message is clear: Don't dabble - stay home if you're not committed."

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD ARTICLE ?



1. Answer the Question.

This is the first and most important suggestion. Answering the wrong question is a common mistake made by students. Unfortunately, it can be a real disaster for the grade you get in an exam. Make sure you understand what the examiner wants; it is highly advisable to refer back to the question throughout the answer. This point may sound like stating the obvious; but, in my experience, answering the wrong question is the biggest cause of a disappointing exam result.

2. Good Introduction.

In an introduction to an essay you should offer a short, concise summary of the main points to be raised. If appropriate, you could clarify key concepts. Introductions go wrong when students go into too much detail, and then repeat their arguments in the main body of the text. Generally speaking, it is advisable to start off with short sentences, rather than complex sentences. This will help create a clarity of thought and purpose.

3. Essay Plan.

A plan can help to gather your thoughts, and make sure you do not forget to mention key arguments. It is an opportunity to brainstorm what you know about the topic. However, it is important not to get into too much detail – writing keywords and phrases are the best solution

4. 3 Steps of an argument.

- The first step is the basic statement and argument; this part tests your knowledge.
- The second step is to explain your statement. Don't forget you need to explain in relation to the question. Also, just because you think the explanation is obvious, doesn't mean you can avoid putting it down.
- The third step is to look at the argument with critical distance. This is an opportunity to discuss why the basic premise may be wrong or limited. It is an opportunity to show you can think for yourself, rather than just memorise a list of points. This final step, called analysis or evaluation, is the most difficult part, but is required to get the highest mark.

5. Conclusion.

In a conclusion you can weigh up the different arguments and decide which are the strongest and most relevant. A conclusion should try to add something new, and not just repeat previous points. For example, you can say why an argument is particularly strong and give justification.



18 COMMON WORDS THAT YOU SHOULD REPLACE IN YOUR WRITING

It's a familiar scene: you're slumped over your keyboard or notebook, obsessing over your character. While we tend to agonize over everything from structure to backstory, it's important to weigh how you write something too. A perfectly constructed world is flat on the page if you use feeble, common words. When you're finished constructing your perfectly balanced world, do your writing a favor and take another pass to weed out these 18 haggard words.

Good

High on any list of most used English words is "good." While this word may appear to be the perfect adjective for nearly anything, that is precisely what makes it so vague. Try getting more specific. If something's going well, try "superb," "outstanding" or "exceptional."

New

Another of the common words in English is "new." "New" is an adjective that doesn't always set off alarm bells, so it can be easy to forget about. Give your writing more punch by ditching "new" and using something like "latest" or "recent" instead.

Long

Much like "new," "long" is spent, yet it doesn't always register as such while you're writing. Instead of this cliché phrase, try describing exactly how long it is: "extended," "lingering" or "endless," for example.

Old

"Old" is certainly one of those common words that means more to readers if you're specific about how old a subject is. Is it "ancient," "fossilized," "decaying" or "decrepit"?

Right

"Right" is also among the common words that tends to slip through our writer filters. If somebody is correct, you could also say "exact" or "precise." Don't let habit words like "right" dampen your writing.

Different

Here's another adjective that falls a bit flat for readers, but can also easily be improved by getting more specific. Saying something is "odd" or "uncommon" is very different than saying it is "exotic" or "striking."

Young

Another case of being too generic is what makes "young" a problematic adjective. If you want your writing to be more captivating, try switching "young" out for "youthful," "naive" or "budding."

Never

"Never" is also among common words to use sparingly. Not only is it a common, stale descriptor, it's also usually incorrect. For something to never happen, even one instance makes this word inaccurate. Try "rarely," "scarcely" or "occasionally" instead.

Things

"Things" is another repeat offender when it comes to worn out words. Another word where specificity is the key, try replacing "things" with "belongings," "property" or "tools."

All

Just like "never," "all" is an encompassing, absolute term. Not only is "all" unoriginal, it's not usually factual. Try using "each" and "copious" instead.

Feel

"Feel" is also in the company of common English words. Try using "sense," or "discern" instead. You can also move your sentence into a more active tense: "I feel hungry" could become "I'm famished," for example.

Seem

"Seem" is bad habit word we are all guilty of using. Regardless of how well you think your sentence is constructed, try switching "seem" out for "shows signs of." "Comes across as" is another good option to give your writing more power.

Almost

Another easy adjective to let slip by, "almost" is a wasted opportunity to engage your readers. "Almost" is more interesting if you say "practically," "nearly" or "verging on" instead.

Just

"Just making" it or "just barely" affording something isn't very descriptive. To truly grab a reader, we must do better. Try "narrowly," "simply" or "hardly" to give your phrasing more weight.

Went

Last but not least, avoid using the common word "went" to describe your subject. "Went" is a word that lacks traction. Try using "chose," "decided on" or "rambled" to truly grab your readers.

Small

"Small" is another adjective that is too generic for writing as good as yours. Use "microscopic," "miniature" or "tiny" instead. Even using "cramped" or "compact" is more descriptive for your audience.

Large

Just like relying too much on "small," we tend to describe large things as, well, "large." Specificity is a big help with this one too: could your subject be "substantial," "immense," "enormous" or "massive"?

Next

Whenever we describe something coming "next," we run the risk of losing our readers. Good options to make your reading more powerful include "upcoming," "following" or "closer."