

PROBLEMS WITH ARTICLES

Articles are very difficult to learn because there are many rules, many exceptions, and many special cases. It is possible, however, to learn a few rules that will help you to use articles correctly much of the time.

Nouns in English can be either countable or uncountable. If a noun is countable, it must be either singular or plural. In addition to these general types of nouns, there are two types of articles: definite (specific) and indefinite (general).

ARTICLES	COUNTABLE SINGULAR NOUNS	COUNTABLE PLURAL NOUNS	UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS
INDEFINITE (General)	<i>a</i> dollar <i>an</i> apple	_____ dollars _____ apples	_____ money _____ juice
DEFINITE (Specific)	<i>the</i> dollar <i>the</i> apple	<i>the</i> dollars <i>the</i> apples	<i>the</i> money <i>the</i> juice

SKILL 52: USE ARTICLES WITH SINGULAR NOUNS

You can see from the chart that if a noun is either countable plural or uncountable, it is possible to have either the definite article *the* or no article (indefinite). With *all* countable singular nouns, however, you must have an article (unless you have another determiner such as *my* or *each*).

- I have *money*. (uncountable — no article needed)
 I have *books*. (countable plural — no article needed)
 I have *a book*. (countable singular — article needed)

The following chart outlines the key information that you should remember about articles with singular nouns:

ARTICLES WITH SINGULAR NOUNS
A singular noun must have an article (<i>a, an, the</i>) or some other determiner such as <i>my</i> or <i>each</i> . (A plural noun or an uncountable noun may or may not have an article.)

EXERCISE 52: The following sentences contain different types of nouns. Circle only the countable singular nouns. Mark where articles (or determiners) have been omitted. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- ___ I 1. She is taking ^V(trip) with friends.
 ___ C 2. In my (yard) there are flowers, trees, and grass.
 ___ 3. The manager sent memo to his employees.
 ___ 4. There is car in front of the building.
 ___ 5. The child and his friends are having milk and cookies.

- _____ 6. She is studying to be an actress in films.
- _____ 7. My neighbor was arrested for throwing rocks through windows.
- _____ 8. We have machinery that prints ten pages each minute.
- _____ 9. Teacher has many students during a semester.
- _____ 10. Can you heat water for tea?

SKILL 53: DISTINGUISH A AND AN

The basic difference between *a* and *an* is that *a* is used in front of consonants and *an* is used in front of vowels (*a, e, i, o, u*):

<i>a</i> book	<i>an</i> orange
<i>a</i> man	<i>an</i> illness
<i>a</i> page	<i>an</i> automobile

There are two exceptions to this rule: *u* and *h*. When *u* is pronounced like the consonant *y* (as in *usual*), it is preceded by the article *a* rather than *an*. When *h* is not pronounced (as in *honor*), it is preceded by the article *an* rather than *a*. Pronounce the following examples:

<i>a</i> university	an unhappy man	<i>a</i> hospital	an honor
<i>a</i> unit	an understanding	<i>a</i> heart	an herb

The following chart outlines the key information about the use of *a* and *an*:

A AND AN	
A	A is used in front of a singular noun with a <i>consonant</i> sound.
AN	An is used in front of a singular noun with a <i>vowel</i> sound.
Be careful of nouns beginning with <i>H</i> or <i>U</i> . They may have a vowel or a consonant sound.	

EXERCISE 53: Each of the following sentences contains *a* or *an*. Circle each *a* or *an*. Underline the beginning of the word that directly follows. Pronounce the word. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- ___ I ___ 1. The dishwasher quit his job because he was making only four dollars (a) hour.
- ___ C ___ 2. It was (an) unexpected disappointment to receive (a) rejection letter from the university.
- _____ 3. It is raining, so you should bring a umbrella.
- _____ 4. He bought a half gallon of milk and a box of a hundred envelopes.
- _____ 5. An objection was raised because it was such a unacceptable idea.