

Lecture Sheet on Articles

Article

“A”, “An” and “The” are called articles.

Types

There are 2 types of Articles:

1. Indefinite : A, An
2. Definite : The

Use of Indefinite Article (A, An)

Rule 1:

‘A’ is used before words beginning with consonant.

Example: a ball, a garden, a beautiful rose etc.

Rule 2:

‘An’ is used before words beginning with vowel.

Example: an egg, an owl, an honest man.

Rule 3:

A/An are used only before singular countable noun.

Example: a book, a city, an animal etc.

Rule 4:

Sometimes indefinite articles are used to refer the number ‘one’/’each’/’per’.

Example: 1. I have a car. (One car)

2. It goes 50 miles an hour. (Per Hour)

Rule 5:

‘A’ sometimes comes before determiners, for example, a few, a little, a lot of, a most, etc. but in the case of many, a or an - comes after.

Example: 1. I have a few friends coming over.

2. There is a little milk in the jar.

Rule 6:

A or An - sometimes makes a Proper Noun a Common Noun.

[Note: Proper nouns generally do not take any articles, but when a proper noun needs to be used as a common noun, you must bring A or An - for it.]

Example:

1. He thinks he is a Shakespeare. (Here, 'Shakespeare' does not refer to the actual person but someone like him.)
2. He seems to be an Australian. ('Australia' is a proper noun but 'Australian' is a common noun)

Rule 7:

Use A before words such as "European", "University" or "One" which sound like "Yu" and "Wun" and seems that they start with a consonant "Y" and "W".

Remember, it is the sound not the spelling which is important.

Example: He is a university student. [Sounds like "yu-niversity]

She is a European. [Sounds like "yu-ropean]

She has a euro. [Sounds like "yu-ro"]

She gave a one-taka note. [Sounds like "wun"]

Rule 8:

Use AN before words such as "hour", "honest" which sound like they start with a vowel "O" though the first letter is a consonant.

Example: He is an honest man. [Sounds like 'ounest']

I only have an hour for lunch. [Sounds like our]

Use of Definite Article (The)

Rule 1:

To indicate a particular person(s) or thing(s)

Example: 1. The man is running. (A particular man)
2. Where is the pen I gave you last year?

Rule 2:

To generalize a group/whole class.

Example: 1. The dog is a faithful animal. (Refers to the whole species of dog.)
2. The honest are respected.

Rule 3:

Before superlative adjectives.

Example: 1. She is the most attentive student in the class.
2. He is the tallest player in the team.

Rule 4:

Before the names of (a) sacred books (b) newspapers (c) rivers (d) mountain ranges (e) seas, oceans (f) islands etc.

Example:

1. The Quran, the Bible, the Gita etc.
2. The Daily Star, The prothomAlo, The New York Times, etc.
3. The Padma, the Jamuna, the Meghna, the Nile, etc.
4. The Himalayas, the Andes, the Western Ghats, the Nilgiris, the Alps etc.
5. The Indian Ocean, the Antarctic Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Arctic Ocean.
6. The West Indies, the Andamans, etc.

Rule 5:

Before the names of communities.

Example: The Muslims, the Hindus, the Christians etc.

Rule 6:

Before the name of seasons.

Example: The winter, the summer, the autumn etc.

Rule 7:

Before ordinal numbers

Example: The first, the second, the third etc.

Rule 8:

To refer a part from a large group.

Example: 1. One of the girls was absent.

2. Some of the stolen jewelry was recovered.

Omission of Articles

1. Before uncountable nouns

We do not use articles before uncountable and abstract nouns used in a general sense.

- ✓ Honey is sweet. (NOT The honey is sweet)
- ✓ Sugar is bad for your teeth. (Not the sugar)
- ✓ Wisdom is better than riches. (Not the wisdom)

2. Before plural countable nouns

We do not use articles before plural countable nouns used in a general sense.

- ✓ Children are innocent.
- ✓ Computers are useful machines.

3. Before proper nouns

We do not use articles before the names of countries, people, continents, cities, rivers and lakes.

- ✓ India is a democratic country. (NOT The India)
- ✓ Paris is the capital of France. (NOT The Paris)

4. Before the names of meals

We do not use articles before the names of meals.

- ✓ Mother is cooking lunch.
- ✓ Dinner is ready.

5. Before languages

We do not use articles before the names of languages.

- ✓ Can you speak English? (NOT can you speak the English?)
- ✓ They speak French at home. (Not they speak the French)

6. Before school, college, university, church, bed, hospital, prison etc.

- ✓ His dad is still in hospital.
- ✓ We learned English at school.
- ✓ He is at university.

[Note: “The” is used when the reference is specific or in a particular sense.]