

Mary is a scientist. She works at the University of Manchester.

Definition

We use articles before nouns to help define them.

Indefinite and definite articles

Indefinite article: a or an

I have a banana and an orange.

Definite article: the

The food at this restaurant is delicious.

Note

Sometimes an article is not necessary but we always need one with a singular countable noun.

	Singular countable nouns	Plural countable nouns	Uncountable nouns
a - for nouns that begin with a consonant	\checkmark	×	×
an - for nouns that begin with a vowel	\checkmark	×	*

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Indefinite article

a or an

we use a:

- before consonants: a doctor, a mechanic, a dog, a big car, a happy person
- before vowels that sound like the consonant /j/: a university, a European person

we use an:

- before vowels: an architect, an umbrella, an easy exercise, an important meeting
- before 'h' when it is silent: an hour, an honourable person
- before consonants that sound like vowels: an FBI agent, an SNCF employee

Rules for 'a/an'	Examples
To define something	Tennis is a sport. Manchester is a city in England. A mule is an animal with long, furry ears.
To describe someone or something	She's a lovely person. He's an optimist. She's a good swimmer. It's a lovely day today. She lives in a big house.
To talk about jobs	He's a lawyer and his wife is an electrician.
When we mention something or someone for the first time	l have a dog and a cat. There's an angry man in reception! She has a new car.
When we mean one of many - it doesn't matter or we don't know which one	Can you open a window, please? She works in an office.

Definite article

We use the before singular and plural countable nouns and before uncountable nouns.

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Examples
Where is he? Itale in the heatrease
Where is he? He's in the bedroom.
What is the name of your company?
Here are the parts that you ordered.
The children are on holiday this week.
[the speaker's children]
We have a cat and a dog. The cat is
very old but the dog loves playing with
the children.
Paris is the capital city of France.
the sun
the Queen of England
the UK
the UK the United States
the Netherlands
the Alps
the Maldives
the Far East
the Mid-West [U.S.]
the North
Manchester is a city in the north-west
of England.
the North Pole
the Pacific
the Irish Sea
the Rhone
the Sahara
the Black Forest
the Gulf of Mexico
The Spanish start work later and finish
later than other Europeans.
The Japanese are often quiet during meetings.

A particular animal, machine, musical instrument etc.	The elephant lives in Africa and Asia Do you play the piano?
Buildings	the National Gallery
-	the Louvre
	the Ritz Hotel
	the Opus Restaurant
Some organisations and institutions	the police
	the Army, the Navy, the Royal Air
	Force
	the BBC
	the Internet
Some expressions relating to position	on the top
or time	in the middle
	at the bottom
	on the left/right
	at the moment
	in the end
	at the beginning
	at the weekend
	in the morning/afternoon/evening

Introduction

Examples





Can you open a window, please?

Harvard Book Store

I need to buy a book.



The book I am looking for is by J. Wright.

Can you close the window, please?

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