

Chapter

8

Articles

What is an Article?

Articles are very important words in English and so is their knowledge. Articles are used before only nouns to limit or define their (Nouns) uses in the context of the sentence. They impart effectiveness and accuracy to the nouns. In fact, articles are used as **demonstrative adjectives and determiners before nouns**.

There are two kinds of articles.

- (I) Indefinite Articles —A, An (in the sense of 'one' and 'any')
- (II) Definite Articles—The (in the sense of 'this' and 'that')

Rules of Articles**The Use of Indefinite Articles 'A', 'An'****Rule I**

A student must note that the choice between 'A' and 'An' is determined primarily by **SOUND**.

(A) 'A' is used before a word beginning.

- (i) With consonant. *e.g.*,

a boy	a child
a student	a book
- (ii) With a vowel giving the sound of a consonant. *e.g.*,

a one eyed man	a university student
a European	a unique book
a uniform	a universal problem

(B) 'An' is used before a word beginning.

- (i) With a vowel. *e.g.*,

an elephant	an apple
an ass	an umbrella
- (ii) With a mute 'h'. *e.g.*,

an hour	an heir
an honourable person	an honest man
an honorary post	an hourly visit
- (iii) With a consonant pronounced with the sound of a vowel. *e.g.*,

an LL.B student	an M.P.
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Rule II

(I) Indefinite article 'A/An' is used when we talk of a thing or a person that is indefinite or that is mentioned for the first time. (in the sense of 'one')

(II) Indefinite article is also used to express a class (in the sense of 'any') [Rule III (B)]

(A) Before a singular countable common noun when it is mentioned for the first time representing no particular person or a thing. e.g.,

- (i) I need a book. (one)
- (ii) Twelve inches make a foot. (one)
- (iii) A beggar came to my door. (one)
- (iv) Please get me a scooter. (one)
- (v) She gave her a note book. (one)

(B) Before a singular countable noun which is used to single out some person / something as a representative of a class of things, animals and persons. [Rule III (C)] e.g.,

- (i) A cow is a useful animal. (any in the sense of class)
- (ii) A beggar cannot be a chooser. (any in the sense of class)
- (iii) A rose is a beautiful flower. (any in the sense of class)
- (iv) A son should be obedient. (any in the sense of class)

(C) To make a common noun of a proper noun to express quality.

- (i) A Shylock is living in my neighbourhood. (a cruel miser)
- (ii) He is a Vikramaditya known for his fairness. (a just man)

[Refer to Rule III (H)]

(D) In certain expressions of quantity with certain numbers and expressions of 'Price/rate, speed, ratio'. e.g.,

- (i) Rupees ten a kilo.
- (ii) A dozen mangoes.
- (iii) Half a dozen.

[Refer to Rule III (L)]

(E) When 'A/An' represents a weakened form of preposition 'in'. e.g.,

- (i) He earns fifty thousand rupees a year.
- (ii) We should brush our teeth two times a day.

(F) In exclamations with 'what' or 'how' before singular countable nouns. e.g.,

- (i) What a hot day!
- (ii) What a pretty girl!
- (iii) What a naughty child!
- (iv) How fine a day!
- (v) What a fool he is.
- (vi) What kind of a teacher.
- (vii) What fool will believe it?

[Correct (Interrogative)]

* But we don't say 'What a kind of'.

(G) **Note** the position of indefinite article in the following adverbs :

'Rather, very, much, quite, so, too, such, as' e.g.,

- (i) It is rather a nuisance.
- (ii) It is rather a good step (or a rather good step).

- (iii) He is a very good person.
 - (iv) He is a much hated character.
 - (v) He is such a nice man that everybody likes him.
 - (vi) It is quite an interesting story.
 - (vii) She is as intelligent a student as her brother is.
 - (viii) She is too weak a student to pass.
 - (ix) She is so weak a student that she can't pass.
- (H) Before a person not known to the speaker. *e.g.*,
- (i) A Mr. Gupta = Some Mr. Gupta
 - (ii) A Mrs. Sharma = Some Mrs. Sharma
- (I) Before the verbs used as nouns. *e.g.*,
- (i) For a swim
 - (ii) For a talk
 - (iii) For a visit
 - (iv) For a walk
 - (v) For a drive
 - (vi) For a rest
 - (vii) Have a taste
 - (viii) Have a mind
 - (ix) Have a pain
- (J) Before certain phrases. *e.g.*,
- (i) In a hurry
 - (ii) A pity
 - (iii) Take a liking
 - (iv) Feel a shame
 - (v) Take a fancy
 - (vi) Make a noise
 - (vii) Tell a lie.
- (K) Before the words denoting numbers. *e.g.*,
- (i) A hundred
 - (ii) A dozen
 - (iii) A million
- (L) Before the adjectives 'little' and 'few' to give the sense of 'some'
- (Rule V on Adjectives)
- A little— some (Quantity)
 A few — some (Number)
- (i) I have little money to buy a house. (hardly any)
 - (ii) Please give me a little sugar. (some)
 - (iii) He has spent the little money that he had. (some but all)
 - (iv) There are few boys in the class. (hardly anyone)
 - (v) I met a few students in the university. (some)
 - (vi) The few students that were in the class were sitting idle. (some but all)
- (M) There is no plural of 'a', 'an'. 'Some' or 'Any' is the equivalent of the plural.
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| A horse | some horses/any horses |
| An orange | some oranges/any oranges |

The Use of Definite Article 'The'

Rule III

- (A) When we talk of a particular person or a thing as already mentioned, known or under discussion, *eg.*
- (i) The book (which you mentioned) is not available in the market.
 - (ii) Let us study the lesson carefully. (lesson in hand)

- (B) Before **proper nouns** (unique objects) when they refer to the names of historical buildings, mountain ranges, planets, rivers, oceans, gulfs, groups of islands, holy books, ordinals, descriptive names of countries, states, newspapers, magazines, deserts, superlative degree, names of trains, hotels, shops, trains, eg.

The Persian Gulf	The Taj Mahal	The Netherlands
The Indian Ocean	The best picture	The Sudan
The Ganges	The first man	The USA
The Himalayas	The Sahara	The Maurya Sheraton
The Ramayana	The Bay of Bengal	The Ranjit
The Vedas	The Rajdhani Express	
The Moon	The Times of India	
The Sun	The Frontline	
The Earth	The North Pole	

* 'The' is not used before Aravali and Everest because they are not mountain ranges.

- (C) When a singular noun expresses a class of animal or things. But 'the' is avoided with their plural forms and persons to express a class, e.g.,

- (i) The dog is a faithful animal.
- (ii) The rose is a sweet flower.
- (iii) The cow is economically useful.
- (iv) Dogs are faithful.
- (v) The cows are economically useful. (Delete 'the')
- (vi) The son should be obedient. (Delete 'The', use 'A'. 'The' before a person does not express a class of persons)

Note : Indefinite article 'A' is used—

- (1) In the sense of 'any' to single out a person, a thing or an animal as a representative of a class. [Refer to Rule II (B)]

- (i) A son should be obedient.
- (ii) A cow is a useful animal.
- (iii) A mango is a sweet fruit.
- (iv) Sons should be obedient.

- (2) 'Man/Woman/Mankind' used in general sense to represent human race are used without article. e.g.,

- (i) Man is mortal. — used in general sense.

- (D) Before an adjective when it represents a class of persons. e.g.,

- (i) The rich should help the poor.
- (ii) The old are respected by the young.

- (E) Before musical instruments. e.g.,

- (i) He can play the flute.
- (ii) She is fond of playing the harmonium.

- (F) As an adverb with a comparative sense. (Double comparison) *e.g.*,
 (i) The sooner, the better
 (ii) The higher you go, the colder it is.
- (G) Before comparative degree in case of a choice. *e.g.*,
 (i) She is the weaker of the two sisters.
 (ii) Which is the more beautiful of the two sisters?
- (H) Before proper noun for the sake of comparison. *e.g.*,
 (i) Surdas is the Milton of India.
 (ii) Kalidas is the Shakespeare of India. [Refer to Rule II (C)]
- (I) Before sports cups, and trophies. *e.g.*,
 (i) India won the Singer Cup last year.
 (ii) A number of teams are taking part in the World Cup.
- (J) Before physical positions. *e.g.*,
 (i) The top of the mountain.
 (ii) The back of the house.
 (iii) The centre of the market.
 (iv) The front of the house.
- (K) With the cardinal points. *e.g.*,
 (i) The Sun rises in the East.
 (ii) The Himalayas are to the north of India.
- (L) Before a unit of measurement. *e.g.*,
 (i) Cloth is sold by the metre.
 (ii) Eggs are sold by the dozen. [Refer to Rule II (D)]
- (M) Before caste and communities. *e.g.*,
 (i) The Rajputs are brave people.
 (ii) The Marathas are hard working.
- (N) Before the adjectives 'same & whole' and after the adjective 'all & both' used with plural nouns. *e.g.*,
 (i) This is the same book that you gave me.
 (ii) The whole class was absent.
 (iii) All the boys were present there.
 (iv) Both the brothers were honest.
 (v) All sugar is wasted.
- (O) In certain idiomatic phrases. *e.g.*,
 (i) In the wrong. (ii) On the contrary.
 (iii) In the town (iv) The benefit of the doubt.
 (v) In the air (vi) Speak the truth.
 (vii) Out of the question. (viii) In the right.
- (P) Before a common noun to give it the force of a superlative. *e.g.*,
 (i) She is the woman.
 (ii) Netaji was the leader.
 (iii) He is the man for this job.

- (Q) Before a common noun to give it the sense of an abstract noun (feelings, qualities etc.) e.g.,
- (i) The judge in him.
 - (ii) The mother in her. (sense of justice)
 - (iii) The beast in him. (feelings of a mother)
(cruelty of a beast)
- (R) Before inventions. e.g.,
- (i) The telephone.
 - (ii) The wireless.
 - (iii) The television. (as an invention)
 - (iv) He was watching television. ('television' is used just as a set.)
 - (v) He was listening to the Radio.
- (S) Before the name of professions used collectively. e.g.,
- (i) The Press.
 - (ii) The Bench.
- (T) Before a noun, qualified by adjectives. e.g.,
- (i) The former President Abdul Kalam
 - (ii) The immortal Shakespeare.
 - (iii) The late Shri S.C. Bose.
- (U) Before the case in apposition. e.g.,
- (i) Netaji, the hero of Modern India, ought to be remembered.
 - (ii) Who can underestimate Mr. Vajpayee, the former Prime Minister?
- (V) Before the dates. e.g.,
- (i) The 10th of May.
 - (ii) The 5th of September.
- (W) Before the organs of government. e.g.,
- (i) The Judiciary
 - (ii) The Legislature
- (X) Before the parts of a body of a person in place of possessive adjectives. e.g.,
- (i) He hit me on the back.
 - (ii) She caught me by the arm.
- (Y) Before the political parties. e.g.,
- (i) The BJP
 - (ii) The Labour Party.
 - (iii) The Janta Party.
- (Z) Before the Armed forces. e.g.,
- (i) The Army.
 - (ii) The Police.
 - (iii) The Air force.
- (Z) (a) Before the dynasties, empires, wars, revolutions, centuries. e.g.,
- (i) The Gupta dynasty.
 - (ii) The British empire.
 - (iii) The Red revolution.
 - (iv) The Middle Ages.

- (v) The Civil war.
- (vi) The Vedic ages.
- (vii) The Sixth century.
- (b) Before language to signify nationality. *e.g.*,
 - (i) The Chinese are hard working.
 - (ii) The Japanese are patriots out and out.
- (c) Before nationality (plural) *e.g.*,
 - (i) The Greeks.
 - (ii) The Indians.
 - (iii) The Asians.

Note : But we say.

An Indian, An Asian, A Greek.

- (d) Before little and few.
 - (i) The little – some but all
 - (ii) The few – some but all

[Refer to Rule II (L)]

Rule IV : The Omission of Articles

The article 'A/An, The' are omitted—

- (A) Before proper noun. *e.g.*,
 - (i) Shakespeare was the greatest dramatist.
 - (ii) Delhi is the capital of India.

Note : (a) When indefinite article is used before proper nouns they become common nouns.
 (b) 'The' before a proper noun is used for the sake of comparison.

e.g.,

- (i) This man is a Shylock. (a miser)
- (ii) Samudra Gupta was the Napoleon of his age.

(The greatest general of his time.)

- (B) Before names of materials. *e.g.*,
 - (i) Silver is a useful metal.
 - (ii) Tea grows in India.
 - * but we can say
 - (iii) The tea of Assam is very famous.
 - (iv) The water of the Ganga is sacred.

(particular tea)
 (particular water)

- (C) Before common noun used in its widest sense. *e.g.*,
 - (i) Man is Mortal.
 - (ii) God is omnipresent.
 - * But we say 'the devil'.

(iii) The gods and the goddesses are kind to him. (in the sense of deities)

- (D) Before abstract nouns as qualities, feelings and states used in general sense. e.g.,
- (i) Truth is a noble quality.
 - (ii) Love is a natural feeling.
 - (iii) Honesty is the best policy.

Note : But we can say. e.g.,

- (i) The honesty of my brother is beyond any doubt.
- (ii) He always tells a lie.
- (iii) He always speaks the truth.

- (E) Before noun complement. (appoint, make, elect, select etc.) e.g.,
- (i) The committee appointed him Captain.
 - (ii) They elected him President.

- (F) Before collective nouns in general sense. e.g.,
- (i) Life is complex.
 - (ii) Society does not allow this.

- (G) Before uncountable nouns. (Refer to Rule I in the chapter on Nouns). e.g.,
- (i) He gave me advice.
 - (ii) He passed on information to me.

- (H) Before languages. e.g.,
- (i) Chinese is a difficult language.
 - (ii) He knows Russian very well.
 - He knows the Sanskrit language.

[Rule III Z(b)]

- (I) Before 'school, college, home, church, temple, sea, work, bed, table, hospital, market, prison, court' when their purpose is thought of rather than the actual building/place. e.g.,
- (i) We go to temple on Mondays. (for prayer)
 - (ii) The thief went to the bed. (upto the bed)
 - (iii) I go to bed early. (to sleep)
 - (iv) He was sent to prison after conviction. (as a prisoner)
 - (v) He went to Sea in his early youth. (as a sailor)
 - (vi) He went to the Sea alone. (travel & other purposes)

Note : 'The' is used before—

'Office, cinema, movie, theatre, picture, circus, station, bus stop' etc.

- (J) Before 'hobbies, professions and sports'. e.g.,
- (i) Dancing is her profession.
 - (ii) Gardening is his hobby.

- (K) Before names of diseases. e.g.,
- (i) Cancer is a dreaded disease.
 - (ii) AIDS is spreading like wild fire.

Note : But we can say the Measles, the Mumps, the Rickets, the Plague, the Flu.

- (L) Before regular meals except when preceded by an adjective. e.g.,
- (i) I take breakfast at 8 a.m.
 - (ii) You should take dinner early.
 - (iii) They gave us a good breakfast.
 - (iv) A good breakfast is necessary.
 - (v) A dinner in honour of the President will be held. (in the sense of Party)

- (M) Before parts of the body. e.g.,
Liver is the largest organ of human body.
- (N) Before modes of travel. e.g.,
(i) He will go by air.
(ii) A journey by road is very comfortable.
- (O) Before names of relations like
'Uncle, mother, father' etc. in place of possessive adjectives. e.g.,
(i) Father will go to Delhi tomorrow.
(ii) Aunt is expected any moment.

Note : 'Father' and 'Aunt' implies 'our father' and 'our aunt'.

- (P) In certain phrases. e.g.,
- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| (i) To lose heart. | Last but not least. |
| (ii) To set foot. | To catch fire. |
| (iii) To give ear. | To send word. |
| (iv) By day. | In hand. |
| (v) At sunrise. | By name. |
| (vi) At home. | At last. |

(Q) Study the following phrases carefully :

- (i) In summer, winter + in the summer season
- (ii) From beginning to end + from the beginning of the day to the end of the day.
- (iii) From right to left + keep to the left.
- (iv) At dawn, at midday, at + during the day, in the afternoon, in the noon, at night, at dusk evening, in the night
- (v) Next week (time) - the next question (number)
- Last week (time) - the last question (number)

(R) Before such nouns as

'Cattle, gentry, people' etc. When they are used in general sense.

(Refer to Rule II on Nouns)

(S) Before little, few. (in negative sense).

- (i) Little sugar (hardly any)
- (ii) Few students (hardly any one)

[Refer to Rule II (L)]

Rule V

(A) When two or more connected nouns refer to the same person or thing, the article should be used before the first noun. However, the article is used before each noun if they refer to two different persons or objects. e.g.,

- (i) The Prime Minister and the President are visiting the town today.
(Two different persons holding two different posts.)
- (ii) The Prime Minister and President of the party is on a visit to the town today.
(one person holding two posts.)

- (B) Similarly, one article before the first adjective is used when two or more adjectives qualify the same noun. e.g.,
She is wearing a black and a white saree. (Omit 'a' before 'white')
- (C) If there are two articles before ordinals, use singular noun. In the case of article before one ordinal, noun should be used in plural form. e.g.,
(i) The first and the second **chapter** are very difficult.
(ii) The first and second **chapters** are very difficult.

Note : The article is not repeated with plural nouns. Verb is plural form in the sentences given in 'C'.

Work Book Exercise (A)

Directions : Spot the errors, if any, in the following sentences—

1. My friend always likes to travel by the air since he is a very busy man.
2. Dr. Radha Krishnan was a more famous philosopher than a politician.
3. The Manager and the Executive Director of our hotel is a very energetic person.
4. Whenever I meet him he always makes a mention of his father.
5. Although he has undergone a very costly treatment, he has not been cured of a headache.
6. Those in hurry should realise that speed is no key to success in life.
7. God made country and man made town.
8. It is pity that he does not behave humbly with his parents and friends.
9. Being M.A. only he could not be appointed to the post of a lecturer.
10. He always takes a heavy breakfast because he generally skips lunch.
11. Please go and find out dog so that you may not lose it forever.
12. Snake we saw was very deadly though it left the kitchen quietly.
13. Tonight I shall go to the bed early because I have to leave for Mumbai at dawn tomorrow.
14. Child needs love and affection if he is to be brought up as a healthy young man.
15. It is said that elephant is vindictive by nature and never forgets his enemy.
16. It is very difficult to get a taxi at such a hour as it is already 11 p.m.
17. Do you take a sugar and if so, how much?
18. She lives in first storey of the house and she has to come down quite often.
19. He knows how to play flute. He learnt it while he was a student.
20. It is said that he is a wise man. He cannot err, Vedas may err.
21. These days only rich can afford the hospitality of the costly nursing homes and hospitals coming up all over the country.
22. Rajputs belong to a martial race since they were organised into the force to fight against the oppression of the rulers.
23. What nice mother she is, because she takes care of every small need of her children.
24. What a kind of fellow he is, if his enemies are to be believed.
25. Kapil Dev brought glory to India by winning World Cup in 1983.

Work Book Exercise (B)

Directions : Spot the errors, if any, in the following sentences—

1. He is as a weak boy as my brother.
2. It is futile to give an advice to a person who would not listen to you.
3. The pride hath a fall, 'Says the Bible.'
4. She is both a virtuous, and a beautiful daughter of a successful working mother.
5. He has been sent to the prison several times but has not shown any sign of improvement in his conduct.
6. He was watching the television when I called on him last night.
7. Prince William is a heir to the throne of the Great Britain.
8. Tea we used to get in the Scouting Camp was never to our taste.
9. It was a so hot day that it was impossible to go out shopping.
10. I shall never forget a good deed you did to me, when I was in crisis.
11. The singing is both my vocation and avocation because it is a source of joy and bread to me.
12. Surdas is often called Milton of India although unlike Milton, Surdas had no political ambitions.
13. Higher you go, colder it is.
14. The old woman placed kettle on fire and come back to the bedroom.
15. Never give the ear to the slanderous talk of others because they are always motivated by jealousy.
16. The District Magistrate possesses both the civil and criminal jurisdiction.
17. You must enjoy classical music on radio even if you are not able to understand its true spirit.
18. I have a work to do and so I will reach late.
19. You should be true to a word because it is a characteristic of a gentleman.
20. This young man is in search of an employment because he is in grave financial crisis.
21. Although he is a hard working student, his success in the examination is out of question.
22. Wisdom of Vikramaditya solved many riddles that pepole brought to him for solution.
23. The Chinese is a very difficult language to understand for those who have never been to China.
24. News you broke to his wife made her nervous and she broke down.
25. The lions are carnivorous.