

Help Centres – English Support



Choosing the Correct Article – A, An, The, or Ø (no article)

1. Is the noun **unknown** or **known** to the reader/listener?

a) Is the noun being **mentioned** for the **first time** or the **second time**?

a/an/Ø

- I bought **a** book.
- I ate **an** apple.
- I am drinking water.

the

- I bought a book. **The** book is interesting.
- I ate an apple. **The** apple was delicious.
- I am drinking water. **The** water is cold.

b) Is the noun's identity **general** or **specific**?

a/an/Ø

- I have **a** book.
- I ate **an** apple.
- I am drinking water.

the

- I read **the** best book in the library.
- I am drinking **the** water that you gave me.

c) Is there **more than one** of the noun or is the noun **unique**?

a/an

- I see **a** star.

the

- I see **the** moon.

2. a) Is the noun **countable** or **uncountable**?

a/an/the

- I ate **a** banana.
- I ate **an** apple.
- I ate **the** green apple.

Ø/the

- I drank water.
- I drank **the** water that you gave me.

b) Is the **countable noun** **singular** or **plural**?

a/an/the

- I have **a** book.
- I ate **an** apple.
- **The** banana was delicious.

Ø/the

- I ate apples.
- I ate **the** apples.

c) Does the **countable noun/modifier** **begin with a consonant sound** or a **vowel sound**?

a

- I ate **a** banana.
- I studied at **a** university.
- I have **a** useful umbrella.
- I have **a** very old umbrella.
- I stayed in **a** hotel.

an

- I ate **an** apple.
- I have **an** umbrella.
- I went to **an** old university.
- I went to **an** extremely good school.
- I studied for **an** hour.
- I worked on **an** MS Word document.

Practice: Write **a**, **an**, or **the** in the places where articles are needed, and **Ø**, where no article is needed.

Today, I went to ____ market. ____ market is next to my ____ house.

I bought ____ apple, ____ loaf of bread, and ____ bottle of milk. On my way home,

I saw ____ cat sitting on a wall. ____ cat looked hungry, so I gave it ____ piece of

bread. I packed ____ lunch and got ready to go see ____ friend of mine.

Now, I am visiting ____ my friend at ____ Beacon Hill Park. We are

sitting on ____ bench and talking about ____ movie we watched last weekend. We love

watching ____ movies together. I can see ____ families having picnics, and I can hear

____ children laughing softly in the background. ____ sun is shining and there are a lot

of ____ birds flying in ____ sky. Today is ____ great day!

Also see the handout: *Noncount Nouns* in CBA 160