

**Austin Peay**
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Articles

Articles (the, a, an)

Articles are used to signal and/or clarify a noun. The three articles in English are *a*, *an*, and *the*.

When to Use an Article

- Articles are used when describing a specific noun. They are left out when talking about general nouns.
 - **General noun:** I like *books*.
 - **Specific noun:** I like *the book* about rabbits.

A, An: These articles are *indefinite* since they describe a *less specific* noun.

- *A* is used before a noun beginning with a consonant; *an* is used before a noun beginning with a vowel or words with a vowel sound.
 - **Example:** *a* hat
 - **Example:** *an* honest man (honest has a vowel sound)
- *A/An* are used with the first introduction of a singular noun.
 - **Example:** I found *a* pair of earrings that match my new dress.
- When referring to a singular noun in a general way, use the indefinite article.
 - **Example:** *A* lack of knowledge will not get *an* applicant hired.

The: This article is *definite* because it describes a *specific* noun.

- *The* is used to clarify nouns and eliminate other interpretations of the sentence's meaning.
 - **Example:** My dad is *the* oldest member of my family.
- *The* can be followed by both singular and plural nouns.
 - **Example:** *The* cats are sleeping.
 - **Example:** *The* mouse ate some cheese.

Tips:

- Be sure that once a noun has been introduced, the definite article *the* is used before the same noun later in the same sentence or paragraph.
 - **Example:** I have two cats, a gray female and a white male. I found *the* gray female as a stray two years ago.