

Articles

~ English Grammar · Competitive Exams ~



Articles (**A, An, The**) are **determiners** placed **before a noun** (or its adjective) to point it out as **definite** or **indefinite**.

Two Kinds of Articles

Indefinite → **A / An**

makes a noun **indefinite / uncertain**.

There was **a** king. · I saw **an** old man.

Definite → **The**

makes a noun **definite / certain**.

This is **the** pen I bought. · **The** water is sweet.

① A or An? Go by the SOUND 🔊

The **first sound** of the next word decides — not the first letter!

A before a word that begins with a **Consonant SOUND**. a table · a pen · a boy

Tricky — consonant **SOUND**, but looks like a vowel

Word	Why 'A'
a	a uniform / union
university	a one-rupee note
	a European
	a B.A. / a one-eyed man
	an-European → a European
	an-union → a union
	an-one-rupee note → a one-rupee note
	an-university → a university

'An' — before a vowel SOUND

AN before a word that begins with a **Vowel SOUND**. an orange ·

Tricky — vowel **SOUND**, but looks like a consonant

Word	Why 'An'
an	an honest boy
hour	an honourable man
	an M.A. / an M.P.
	an S.P. / an X-ray
	'es' / 'eks' sound
	a-hour → an hour
	a-honest man → an honest man



Golden rule → say the word aloud! u/eu = 'yu' (consonant)

Vowel sound vs Consonant sound

Vowel sounds

a, e, i, o, u sounds → use **An**

Consonant sounds

all other opening sounds → use **A**

Same letter, two articles!

an honest man · **a** horse

an

an heir · **a** hotel

an



Exam favourite → abbreviations. If the letter is real (S, X) use **an**: an F.I.R., an H.R. head, an S.D.M.

② Position of the Article ↪

Where the article sits when other words crowd the noun

- Article comes before the noun; if an adjective **adjective.**

A / An / The + (Adjective)

~~Sita is beautiful a girl.~~

→

- With an **adverb + adjective**, the order is:

Article + Adverb + Adjective

~~Sita is very a beautiful girl.~~

→

~~He is very the best player.~~

→

- After **Such / What / Many / Rather / Half**,

Such / What / Many / Rather

~~I have not seen a such girl.~~

→

~~A what place it is!~~

→

~~Many good a book.~~

→

- After **How / So / Too / As + adjective**, the article

How / So / Too / As + Adjective

~~You are too a dull student.~~

→

~~How a beautiful girl is she?~~

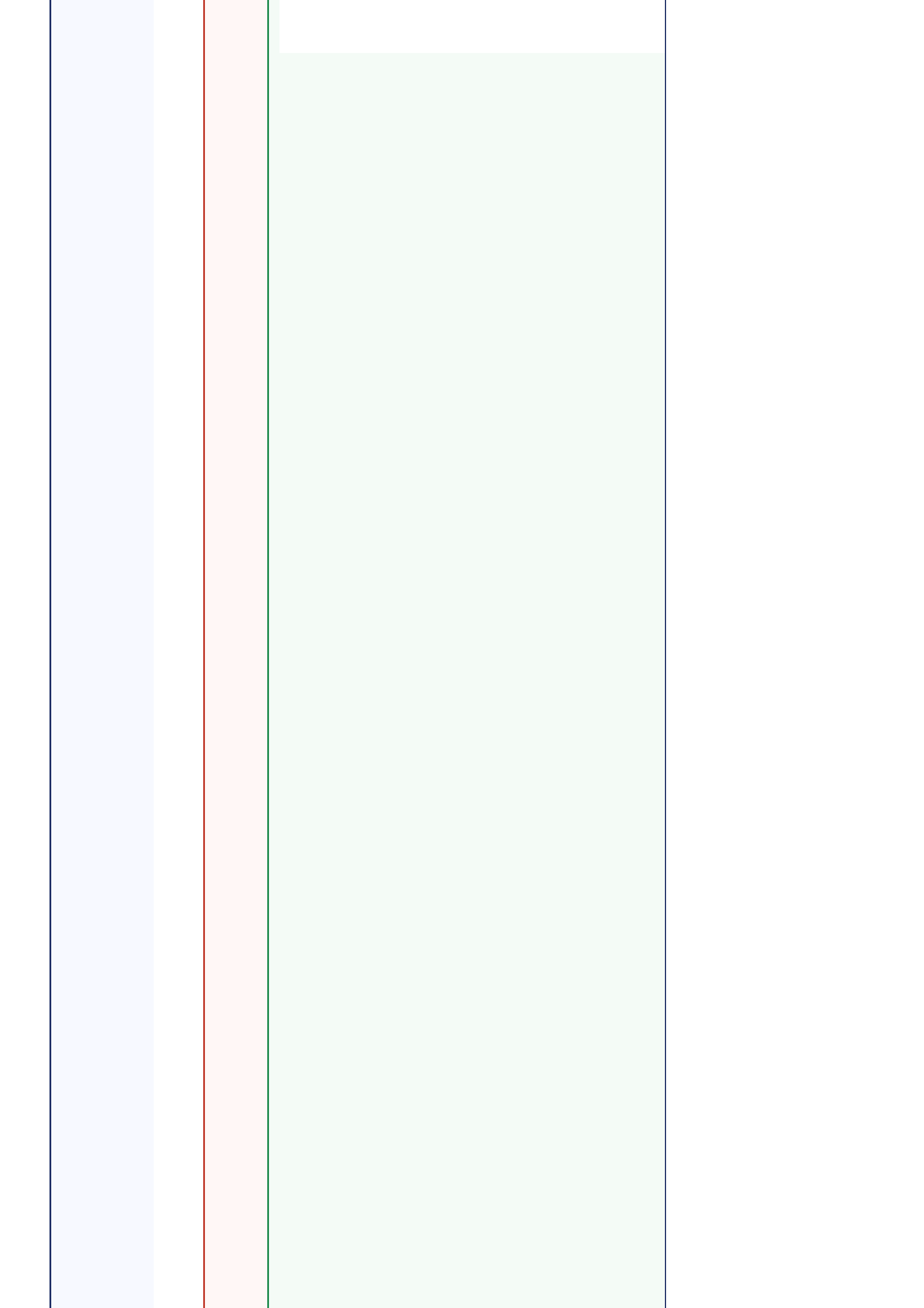
→

~~It is so a fine day!~~

→



Memory hook → **Such, What, Half, Rather, How, As** push it right **after** the adjective.



③ Uses of A / An

1. Before a **Singular Countable Noun** when it is the first thing.

~~She is doctor.~~ → **She is a doctor.** ~~the~~

~~You have umbrella.~~ → **an umbrella.** ~~the~~

2. In several fixed **idioms** the indefinite article is used.

in a hurry · in a temper · in a moment · in a fix · in a
have a headache · have a pain · commit a crime · take

~~I am in hurry.~~ → **in a hurry.** ~~Do~~

3. When a word is used as a **noun** (not a verb)

~~He gave me answer.~~ → **an answer.** ~~the~~

A/An can also mean...

'one' / 'per'

a dozen · a hundred

twice a week · 60 km an hour



A/An = 'one of many', still unknown to the listener. When specific, switch to the.

A → The (as it gets known)

I saw a dog. **The** dog was barking. → first mention

④ Uses of 'The' – Part 1

Use **the** when the noun is definite / one particular thing

1. To make a noun **definite / certain**. The water of the sea is salty.
2. Pattern **Noun + of + Noun** → 'the' before the noun. The gold of India.
3. Before a noun defined by a **relative pronoun** (who, which, that) do it. The boy who is sitting there.
4. Before the **Superlative degree**. I am the best student in the class.
5. In **parallel comparatives** — 'the' before both. The taller of the two.
6. Comparative + **of the two** → 'the' before the noun. The taller of the two.
7. Before an **ordinal number**. He was the first boy to finish.

See the fixes

~~He is boy who can do it.~~ → **He is the boy who can do it.**
~~I am best student of this class.~~ → **I am the best student in the class.**
~~More he reads more he forgets.~~ → **The more... the more he reads, the more he forgets.**
~~Ram is taller of the two.~~ → **Ram is the taller of the two.**

'The' with quantifiers

After **Most of / One of / The number of** → use **the**
Most of **the** boys passed. · One of **the** students · The number of **the** students



Trigger words for 'the' → **superlative, ordinal**
Spot them and 'the' is almost always right.

④ Uses of 'The' – Part 2 (Names)

'The' before these special names — learn the list!

Category	Examples
Rivers, seas, oceans, bays, gulfs	the Ganga, the Bay of Bengal
Deserts & forests	the Thar, the Aravalli
Mountain ranges	the Himalayas
Holy / great books	the Bible, the Quran
Heavenly bodies & directions	the Sun, the Moon
Ships, trains, aeroplanes, papers	the Virat, the Hindustan
Historic buildings / events	the Taj Mahal, the Partition
Musical instruments	play the harmonium
Communities / nationalities	the English, the Indians

~~I play violin.~~ → **I play the violin.** ~~Ganga~~



Exception → a single peak / mount takes **NO** article
Mount Abu.

A few diseases also take 'the'

the plague · the measles · the mumps · the gout · the rabies
(all these diseases take no article)

⑤ Omission – No Article! ⊘

1. Before **plural & uncountable nouns** (general sense)
• They were celebrating **Diwali**.
2. Before **languages, sports, subjects, festivals**.
• She is good at **English**.
• We celebrate **Diwali**.
3. Before **meals**.
• I had **breakfast**. • She invited me to a **dinner** (described)
4. Before **school, college, home, church, hospital**, before going to
• He goes to **school** daily. • He was sent to **hospital**.
5. Before **man, woman, life, death, art, science** in general
• **Life** is not a bed of roses.
6. Before **days, months, seasons & most diseases**
• It was a **long** time before he died of **cholera**.
7. Before proper nouns & after **kind of / sort of / type of**
• He is a **kind of** **man**.

Some Hot Tips 💡

- ✓ After **appoint / elect / declare / crown / make** → no article
• He was **appointed** **Minister**.
- ✓ One noun → one article. Ram is a singer and dancer.
- ✓ After **the post of / rank of / title of** → no article
• He holds **the post of** **Minister**.
- ✓ Idioms with no article: by bus, on foot, at night, in the morning

⚠ Common Errors ⚠

- ~~a M.A.~~ → **an M.A.** ~~an~~
- ~~the both boys~~ → **both the boys** ~~the~~
- ~~go to the school (to study)~~ → **go to school** ~~a school~~

Spot the Error

Find the part (a/b/c/d) that has the article error.

1. He is (a)/ best artist (b)/ of the time but (c)/ let
2. What sort of (a)/ the people (b)/ are they (c)/ w
3. I have (a)/ no money (b)/ to buy (c)/ motor-car
4. I play (a)/ violin (b)/ but not (c)/ the piano (d).
5. The higher he climbs (a)/ cooler (b)/ he feels (c)
6. Gandhiji was a great (a)/ philosopher and a great
7. I cannot afford (a)/ to buy (b)/ a expensive (c)/
8. Of the two boys (a)/ Mohan (b)/ is more (c)/ int
9. He was (a)/ first boy (b)/ to do (c)/ the work (d
10. Ganga is one of (a)/ the longest rivers (b)/ which
11. It was by (a)/ a mistake (b)/ that he caught (c)
12. She replied (a)/ in (b)/ moment (c)/ and left (d

Answer Key

1→(b) the best (superlative). 2→(b) people (no 'the')
3→(b) no money (no article). 4→(b) the violin (instrument). 5→(b) the cooler
6→(a) a great philosopher (one person, drop 'a'). 7→(c) an expensive
8→(b) more intelligent (of the two). 9→(b) the first (ordinal).
10→(b) one of the longest (no article). 11→(b) by mistake (no article). 12→(c) in a moment



Quick Tips → go by **sound** for a/an · **the** for **sound**
ranges · **drop** the article before meals, languages

30-second recap

A/An = one, unknown, by sound · **The** = known, un
plurals, meals, games, languages, proper nouns.

☆ **A, An, The** – small words