

ARTICLES (5)

Indefinite Articles 'a' and 'an' (01) – Part B: Medium

In context

5 min

What are indefinite articles?



a dog



an apple

'a' and 'an' are indefinite articles.

Indefinite Articles

10 min

'a' and 'an' are indefinite articles, used before singular countable nouns. We use them to refer to an unspecific object that is one of many of the same objects.

We use 'a' before a noun with a consonant sound.

Examples:

a dog

a bird

'an' is used before a noun with a vowel sound.

Examples:

an egg

an uncle

It is the sound that matters, not the letter we write. So we say "an" before a vowel sound, not necessarily before a vowel. Likewise, we say "a" before a consonant sound, not necessarily before a consonant.

Examples:

a happy day (consonant sound)

an hour (vowel sound, silent 'h')

a European (consonant sound)

an 'm' (vowel sound)

an 's' (vowel sound)

a 'u' (consonant sound)

We use 'a' and 'an' in expressions of speed, price, number and ration.

Examples:

The car was going forty miles *an* hour.

Eggs cost \$2.20 *a* dozen.

The temperature is taken twice *a* day.

Usually we do not put an article before the name of a person. We do so only when

we do not know their identity.

Examples:

A Mrs. Harris called you half an hour ago.

My father has gone to dinner with *a* Mr. white.

We do not use 'a' and 'an' before plural nouns, uncountable nouns or abstract nouns.

Examples:

Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. (NOT - *A* beauty...)

We can buy eggs and butter from the farm. (NOT - *an* eggs...)

Simplicity is the best virtue. (NOT - *A* simplicity...)

Writing Exercise

5 min

Complete with the indefinite article 'a' or 'an'.

1. It is _____ honor to meet you, Sir.
2. My sister has _____ mobile phone.
3. I like to eat _____ avocado at lunch.
4. _____ university is an institution of higher education and research.
5. He gets paid fifteen dollars _____ hour.
6. He made _____ huge amount of money selling this product.
7. They bought _____ used car last May.
8. I was told _____ Mr. Lowell called you earlier.
9. When it rains, I take _____ umbrella.
10. Italy is _____ European country.

Speaking Exercise with the Instructor

5 min

Read these questions to your teacher. Then, answer.

1. What is the speed limit on a freeway in your country?
2. How often do you go to the gas station on average?
3. Did you study at a university?
4. Do you live in an urban area?
5. Do you prefer movies with a happy ending?

Watch the Video!

5 min

In this video lesson, you will practice when to use the indefinite article 'an' before a consonant.

Watch the video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w1aexHT3qQ&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL

Watch it again and fill in the blanks, based on the video:

1. We use 'an' before a consonant when the consonant _____ like a _____.

2. For instance, we say:

_____ MD

an _____ man

an _____ agent

_____ honor

an _____ to the throne

an NBA _____

Quiz

10 min

True or False?

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. 'a' and 'an' are definite articles. | true | false |
| 2. 'a' and 'an' are used before singular countable nouns. | true | false |
| 2. 'a' and 'an' are used to refer to an unspecific object that is one of many of the same objects. | true | false |
| 4. We use 'an' before vowels only. | true | false |

Put the words in the correct order:

1. unique / is / a / an / athlete / this / opportunity / for

2. away / doctor / apple / day / keeps / a / an / the

3. a / glass / of / a / day / drink / usually / once / I / wine

4. dozen / a / \$3.50 / organic / cost / eggs

Complete the sentences with 'a' or 'an':

- _____ Mrs. Stanford called at 2 pm.
- He is just _____ human being.
- Does your name begin with _____ 'M'?
- He got a ticket for driving 90 miles _____ hour.