

64 Articles overview

64.1 USING ARTICLES

SINGULAR NOUNS

Singular nouns must be used with an article. The definite article ("the") or indefinite article ("a / an") can be used, depending on whether the object is being spoken about in general or specific terms.



PLURAL NOUNS

The indefinite article "a / an" cannot be used with plural nouns. "Some" is used instead for plural nouns when referring to an indefinite quantity of something.



UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

The indefinite article is not usually used with uncountable nouns. The definite article is used to talk about uncountable nouns in specific terms, and the zero article is used to talk about them in general terms.



INDEFINITE ARTICLE

"A" refers to cars in general, not the car he wants to buy.

He wants to buy **a new car**. ✓

I've got **a beautiful green coat**. ✓

"A" is used because the green coat is something new that is being introduced.

The indefinite article cannot be used for plural nouns.

Sam bought **a new shoes** today. ✗

I've just planted **some roses**. ✓

"Some" suggests a limited number of roses, but the exact number is unknown.

"A / an" cannot be used with uncountable nouns.

I left **a money** on the table. ✗

Children should drink **a milk**. ✗

The definite and indefinite articles are used in different situations, and this can depend on whether they are being used with a singular, plural, or uncountable noun.

See also:

Singular and plural nouns **69**

Countable and uncountable nouns **70**

DEFINITE ARTICLE

"The" is used to talk about a specific car that the speaker and listener both know about.

Is **the** red car outside yours? ✓

I want to buy **the green coat** hanging in the window. ✓

The definite article is used to talk about plural nouns in specific terms.

The shoes Sam bought were very expensive. ✓

The roses you planted outside are beautiful. ✓

The speaker is referring to specific money that the listener already knows about, so the definite article is used.

I left **the money** on the table. ✓

Children should drink **the milk**. ✗

Milk is an uncountable noun which is being spoken about in general terms, so the definite article can't be used.

ZERO ARTICLE

This is wrong. Singular countable nouns must have an article.

I've got **new car**. ✗

I've got beautiful **green coat**. ✗

No article is used because "shoes" is a plural noun being spoken about in a general context.

Sam is always buying **shoes**. ✓

Roses are a type of flower. ✓

Roses are being spoken about in general terms. There's no idea of a number.

No article is used because "money" is being spoken about in a general sense.

She earns a lot of **money**. ✓

Children should drink **milk**. ✓