

ARTICLES

A, AN, and THE

The words, A, AN, and THE, are determiners.

In most cases, these words are used to further define the noun to which they are adjacent.

THE = definite article (refers to a specific thing)

EX:

The dog

A & AN = indefinite articles (refers to nothing in particular)

EX:

A hat

An adder

Notice how A is placed before a word beginning with a consonant. In addition, notice how AN is placed before a word starting with a vowel (A, E, I, O, U)

IRREGULARS OF A & AN

Articles may be irregular in some cases.

Usually, irregular articles are when the word needing the article begins with a "U" sound.

Words using a strong "U" sound must use the "A" article, whereas words using a weak "U" sound must use the "AN" article.

EX:

A Utah delegate (notice how the article is not AN)

An Umbrella (notice how the article is not A)

Note: Some additional irregular words may exist with regards to the placement of articles. However, they are very few in number.

EX:

An hour

ABBREVIATIONS USING A & AN

In the case of abbreviations, A/AN articles may be used on an individual basis (again, they are irregular).

EX:

A YMCA employee

An FBI Agent

An ACLU member

A UCTE Member

Use "A" for abbreviations beginning with the following letters:

B
C
D
G
J
K
P
Q
T
U
V
W
Y
Z

EX:

A BYU football player
A CIA operative
A DUI citation
A GPS system
A JCHO secretary
A KOA Campsite
A PPO plan
A QVC Product
A THC derivative
A UVU student
A VH1 video
A WGNO news bulletin
A YMCA dance
A ZS1 formula racer

Use "AN" for abbreviations beginning with the following letters:

A
E
F
H
I
L
M
N
O
R
S
X

EX:

An ACLU lawyer
An EEO officer
An FDIC-insured Account
An OPEC Administrator
An HPV Vaccine
An IED
An LLL fraternity brother
An MD in Psychiatry
An NCA membership
An OPEC Administrator
An RCA recording artist
An SEC officer
An X-1 simulator

WHEN NOT TO USE AN ARTICLE

In other cases, articles may not be used (at all):

[The?]

Dinner was wonderful.

Other cases in which an article might not be used:

Idiomatic Expressions [using be and go] - We'll go by first-class.

Seasons/Times of Year - At Christmas, we like to clean the house.

Time of day - Let us hike to the canyon by dawn.

Institutions - He's in church/college/jail/class.

Meals - Dinner was wonderful.

Diseases - Doc is dying of tuberculosis.

Other indefinite articles include qualifiers:

Some, many, most, much, etc.

EXERCISE

Place the appropriate article (a, an) in front of the word.

_____ musician

_____ Utah senator

_____ award-winning actress

_____ CIA operative

_____ aardvark

_____ elongated, chain-linked fence

_____ animal

_____ hard-shell crab

_____ eel

_____ railway

_____ FBI agent

_____ DPS Officer