

What Are Articles?

Articles are the adjectives *a*, *an*, and *the*. Articles are also known as a *determiner* that indicates a point of reference for the noun it describes.

A and *An* are called **Indefinite articles**. *A* is used before a consonant “sound” and *An* is used before a vowel “sound.”

The is called a **Definite article** which refers to a “specific” person, place, or thing.

Example:

I want **the** iPhone 532 with all **the** added extras, including **a** solar charger, **an** invisible Bluetooth earbud, and **a** transporter beam.

One common mistake with article use is that inexperienced writers follow the misleading idea that the rules related to articles are guided by spelling. This is NOT accurate. The rules for articles are directly related to the “sound” of the word following the article.

I went to (a, an) university.

The word “university” begins with a consonant “yoo” sound. The correct choice would be “a.”

He was (a, an) honor student.

The word “honor” begins with a vowel “on” sound. The correct choice would be “an.”

Examples:

an arch
an infection
a world atlas

an underground passage
an avid fan
an honest mistake

a herd
an hour-long film
a ball



Starling in a frost covered Ponderosa—January 2010—Larry Mayer *Billings Gazette*

A Dust of Snow

by Robert Frost

The way **a** crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From **a** hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of **a** day I had rued.