

## Articles and Noun Phrases\*

### What is an ARTICLE?

In English, these four words—*the*, *a*, *an*, *some*—are called *articles*. An article joins with a noun to form a noun phrase. The article gives information about the noun phrase:

- To tell how many of the noun there are
- To indicate whether the noun is specific or general in nature
- To signal the reader that a noun is being introduced or that it has already been seen

### What is a NOUN PHRASE?

A noun phrase consists of a noun and all of the words that go with it. In this sentence, the article is *the* and the noun is **fence**:            *The blue fence*

Noun phrases can also contain numbers (twelve **days**), possessive nouns (Darien's **handout**), possessive pronouns (my **handout**, their **opinion**), and demonstratives (this **hat**, that **cat**, these **ideas**, those **grades**), as well as descriptive modifiers (the blue **fence**, our ultimate **destination**, the laughing **cow**, a helpful **handout**).

### Two types of articles, definite and indefinite:

The only **definite** article is *the*. The definite article is used for singular, plural, and uncountable nouns when the reader clearly understands which noun is being discussed.

*The man* is tall.

*The sky* is blue.

*The plant* is dying.

*The* is also used when referring to ordinal numbers (*the first* of his name) or when naming monuments (*the Lincoln Memorial*) and events (*the state fair*).

There are three **indefinite** articles: *a*, *an*, and *some*.

*A* and *an* are used to refer to singular nouns used generically, that is, singular nouns that do not name a specific, actual thing. You will know which article to use based on the first letter (really, it's the first sound) of the word following the article. If the first sound of the next word is a consonant, you will use *a*. If the first sound of the next word is a vowel, you will use *an*.

*A pool*, *a bright idea*

*An owl*, *an eager learner*, *an herb garden*

*Some* is used to refer to plural and uncountable nouns.

*Some answers*, *some paths*

*Some soup*, *some water*, *some more salad*

\*Adapted from Your Dictionary, <https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules-and-tips/definite-and-indefinite-articles.html>