

SGT & SA - ENGLISH

ARTICLES

The correct use of articles ('a' or 'an' and 'the') is one of the most difficult points in English grammar. Fortunately, however, most mistakes in the use of the articles do not matter too much according to Michael Swan, the world famous linguist. He says that even if we leave all the articles out of a sentence, it is usually possible to understand it:

"Please can you lend me pound of butter till end of week?"

Again he says that it is obviously better to use the articles correctly by all means. According to Roger Berry, another renowned linguist, articles are very important in English. Not only are they among the commonest words in English, they are often vital for successful communication. They tell you what assumptions people make about their listeners when they speak it. If a stranger comes up to you on a university campus and asks you "Where is the bookstore?", they think that there is only one there, and they assume you think this too. Changing one article for another, or leaving one out, can cause misunderstanding. For example, if you say 'I like English' you mean 'The English Language' but if you say 'I like the English', you mean 'the English people'. See how much difference the simple word makes!

Articles also give you structural information; they tell you that a noun is following in the sentence. For example, If someone asks 'What's that over there?', there is a big difference between answering "Well..." and "A well"(place where water can be taken from underground). One must have to agree that these simple words make biggest difference in meaning. So it is not true to say that articles do not affect meaning. Exercises which simply leave gaps for articles to be put in are misleading; they suggest that the 'meaning' is already there, and that articles are just an obstacle for learners. This is not so. Articles can help you to make meaning clearer or to choose between meanings. Mistakes with articles do not always cause misunderstanding, but they can let the rest of your English down. Many people who are good at English still have problems with articles. It is normal and justifiable to be concerned about being accurate.

The typical two words are: the definite article, the and **the** indefinite article **a/an**

THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

The definite article the has only one form in writing but two pronunciations to speak. Before consonant sounds, it is pronounced as 'tha' and before vowel sounds, it is pronounced as 'thi'. The (tha) *same name was given to this film also. The* (thi/ee) *emphasis is on discipline.* In the examples, the letter 's' in the word 'same' has begun with a consonant sound while the letter 'e' in emphasis has begun with a vowel sound. So it is 'tha' and 'thee or thi'.

What is most important is that it is sound, not the spelling, of the next word which matters. The word 'one' has a consonant sound at start as 'wa' even though there is a vowel in writing. Some words beginning with the letter 'u' have a consonant sound as 'y' or 'j' first in pronunciation. For example, the word 'unit' is pronounced as 'yu:nit' or 'ju:nit' but not as 'oonit'. The following words begin with the letter 'u' but 'the' is pronounced as 'thi' or 'thee' before them because they begin with the sound /j/ or 'y'.

Ubiquitous	unilateral	universe	user	unicorn	unique	uranium
Unanimous	union	university	usual	utensil	uniform	unit
Urine	uterus	uniformed	united	use	utility	uniformity
Unity	useful	utilization	unification	universal	useless	utopian

E.g. Then *the* (pronounced as 'tha') *unity* the Samaikyandhra showed didn't win the game. Similarly, some words begin with the letter 'h' but don't have the sound /h/ in their pronunciation. The first sound in these words is a vowel. Therefore 'honest' is pronounced as 'onist' not 'ha'. This spelling is sometimes called 'the silent h' or 'mute h'.

The following words begin with the letter 'h' but 'the' is pronounced as 'thee' or 'thi' before them because the 'h' is not pronounced or it is unpronounced.

E.g. they never tried to regulate *the* (pronounced as 'thee' or 'thi') *hours* of work.

Heir	honest	honorary	honourably	heiress	honestly	honour
Hour	heirloom	honesty	honourable	hour	hourly	

THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

The Indefinite article has two forms, both in speech and writing. 'A' or 'an' is called the Indefinite article. 'A' is used before consonants and 'an' is used before vowels. E.g. He leads a busy life. You won't get an answer from her. As with the definite article it is the pronunciation, not the spelling, which is important. 'A' is used before words which begin with a consonant sound in speech even if they begin with a vowel letter in writing. E.g. some took him to be a universal god.

PRACTICE TEST ON ARTICLES

1. I had ____ sandwich and ____ apple for breakfast.
2. ____ cow is ____ useful animal.
3. Sivani is ____ intelligent girl.
4. Only ____ Wordsworth can write such a poem.
5. Pour the milk into ____ utensil.
6. It was ____ extremely difficult problem.
7. We will leave after ____ hour.
8. I am yet to meet ____ European.
9. This is ____ humble beginning.
10. The children are busy making ____ x'mas card.

Key

- 1) a, an 2) the, a 3) an 4) a 5) a 6) an 7) an 8) a
9) a 10) an

TENSE

The verb has tense just like the adjective and the adverb have degree. Tense is the time of the action indicated by the verb. In grammar, tense is a category that locates a situation in time, to indicate when the situation takes place. Tense is the grammaticalisation or grammarization of time reference, often using three basic categories of "before now", i.e. the past "now", i.e. the present; and "after now or later", i.e. the future. The "unmarked" reference for tense is the temporal distance from the time of utterance, the "here-and-now", this being absolute tense. Relative tense indicates temporal distance from a point of time established in the discourse that is not the present, i.e. reference to a point in the past or future, such as the future-in-future, or the future of the future (at some time in the future after the reference point, which is in the future) and future-in-past or future of the past (at some time after a point in the past, with the reference point

being a point in the past). Thus tense is of mainly three kinds. The Present, the Past and the Future. Each tense is again divided into four sub tenses. They are: 1. Simple or Indefinite 2. Continuous or progressive 3. Perfect and 4. Perfect continuous. Thus they are twelve tenses besides four more conditional tenses in English altogether forming sixteen tense structures. A mastery over these will make one succeed both in one's written and spoken linguistic approach.

PRACTICE TEST ON TENSE

1. We often ____ my uncle's place during weekend.(visit)
2. I ____ home last night. (not go)
3. I ____ my house completed by next march. (get)
4. We ____ our dinner at hotel Woodlands yesterday. (have)
5. My brother ____ at 3.30P.M. yesterday. (sleep)
6. If you drop the cup, it ____ (break)
7. We ____ the tennis match at this time tomorrow. (watch)
8. At this time, I ____ to the radio. (listen)
9. My watch ____ good time. (keep)
10. Lifting a heavy object ____ work. (is)
11. They ____ unconscious since yesterday. (be)
12. It ____ since last night. (rain)
13. She ____ to our club any more. (not belong)
14. Sheela ____ the plants now. (water)
15. My father ____ from Chennai just now. (return)
16. Why ____ you ____ him? (hate)

Key

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| 1) Visit | 2) Did not go | 3) Will get |
| 4) Had | 5) Slept | 6) Will break |
| 7) Will be watching | 8) Was listening | 9) Keeps 10) Is |
| 11) Have been | 12) Has been raining | 13) Does not belong |
| 14) Is watering | 15) Has returned | 16) Do, hate |