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Articles

The park mystery





Grammar at a glance

When you want to...	Form to use	Worked example
Introduce, then refer back	a or an / the	I saw a fox. The fox stopped.
Listen to the next sound	an hour / a uniform	She waited an hour in a uniform.
Identify which one	a gate / the gate by the pond	Wait at the gate by the pond.
Speak generally	plural or mass noun alone	Dogs need water.
Mark one count noun	a ticket / my ticket	I have a ticket. My ticket is blue.
Follow a changing reference	new person / same person	An artist came. The artist drew us.

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

ARTICLES

Introduce, then refer back



A friendly dog has wandered into the park. Sam wants Lily to help find its owner. First, make sure they are talking about the same dog.

Introduce one countable thing with a or an. Use the when the listener can identify which thing you mean.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Introduce a dog	I found a dog.	Lily meets one dog for the first time.
Refer back to that dog	The dog has a blue collar.	Lily knows you mean the dog just introduced.
Introduce another dog	Another dog joins us.	Now there are two dogs. Your listener may need more detail.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

I found a tag. The tag has a phone number.

Does a mean the speaker does not know which dog?

No. Sam may know exactly which dog he saw. The choice depends on whether the listener can identify it in this conversation.

YOUR TURN

“We found a box.” Refer back: “___ box is empty.” Write the complete second sentence.

> **Answer • The box is empty.**
> The points back to the box.

ARTICLES

Listen to the first sound

Buddy is thirsty, and the search could take a while. Pack a useful rescue bag and tell Lily what you have.

Listen to the sound after the article. Say an hour and a uniform. The first written letter can be a misleading clue.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Say “apple”	An apple	Apple begins with a vowel sound.
Say “uniform”	A uniform	Uniform begins with a consonant “yoo” sound.
Say “hour”	An hour	The h is silent. Hour begins with a vowel sound.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Article	Next sound: vowel	Countable noun
an	empty	bottle

Must every word beginning with u take an?

No. An umbrella begins with a vowel sound; a uniform begins with the “y” sound in yes. The spoken beginning is decisive.

YOUR TURN

Choose a/an: “___ unusual sound came from the gate.”

An / A

> **Answer • An**
> Unusual begins with a vowel sound.

ARTICLES

Any suitable one or a particular one?

A clue mentions a gate. There are several gates around the park. Give directions that let Lily identify the right place.

Use a or an for any suitable one. Use the for a particular one the listener can identify from the situation.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Any suitable gate	Meet me at a gate.	Lily still needs to know which gate to choose.
Identify one gate	Meet me at the gate beside the pond.	The description singles out the gate you mean.
Another example	Wait at the gate by the pond.	Identify which one. Pattern: a gate / the gate by the pond.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Identifying determiner	Noun	Shared landmark
the	gate	beside the pond

Does the always require an earlier mention?

No. Shared surroundings or a uniquely identifying description can establish the reference. Check what the listener can identify.

YOUR TURN

Both friends know the only keeper at this park. “Ask ___ keeper.”
a / an / the

> **Answer • the**
> The shared context identifies the keeper.

ARTICLES

General ideas and specific groups



The keeper has left care instructions. Some are about all dogs; others are about the dogs at the shelter. Help Lily read the difference.

Plural and uncountable nouns can stand without an article for a general meaning. The can point to a specific group or amount.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Talk about dogs generally	Dogs need water.	This describes dogs in general, not just Buddy.
Identify this group	The dogs in this shelter need water.	Now the message points to a particular group.
Another example	Dogs need water.	Speak generally. Pattern: plural or mass noun alone.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Water keeps animals healthy. The water in this bowl is fresh.

Can uncountable nouns ever take the?

Yes. Water is essential is general; the water in Buddy's bowl is specific. Uncountable does not mean that all articles are forbidden.

YOUR TURN

General fact: "___ birds have feathers."

no article / The / A

Answer • no article

General plural birds takes no article.

ARTICLES

Countable nouns and other determiners

The keeper can share an announcement. Help Sam make it clear: a dog has been found, and useful information is available.

In its ordinary counting sense, a singular countable noun needs a word such as a, the or my. Use “my ticket” on its own.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
One countable thing	We found a dog.	One ordinary singular countable noun needs a determiner here.
Uncountable information	We have some information.	Information is not counted with a/an.
A different determiner	This dog is safe.	This already determines dog. Do not add a or the before it.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Amount	Uncountable noun	Topic
some	information	about a dog

Does every noun need an article?

No. Singular countable nouns usually need a determiner in ordinary full sentences, but my and this can do that job. General plural and uncountable nouns often use no article.

YOUR TURN

Introduce one ticket. Add the article: “I found ticket.”

> Answer • I found a ticket.
> Ticket is singular and countable.

ARTICLES

Use everything to solve the mystery

A neighbour arrives with a photograph. Use clear language to compare the clues and reunite Buddy with his family.

Follow the reader's knowledge. You can introduce an honest neighbour, then refer back to the neighbour.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Introduce a clue	I found a photograph.	Introduce one photograph to the listener.
Connect the clue	The photograph shows this dog.	Link the known photograph to the dog in front of you.
Another example	An artist came. The artist drew us.	Follow a changing reference. Pattern: new person / same person.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

New person	Known reference	General class
A girl arrived.	The girl recognised Buddy.	Dogs need safe homes.

Is there one article to use throughout a story?

No. New references become identifiable, descriptions can single things out, and a final general fact may need no article. Meaning changes as the story develops.

YOUR TURN

Introduce a person: "___ honest neighbour helped."
The / An / A

> Answer • An
> Honest begins with a vowel sound.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

Which umbrella is yours?

First introduce one umbrella. Then explain that the same umbrella has a yellow handle.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

I found an umbrella. The umbrella has a yellow handle.

An introduces one umbrella. The points back to the one you just mentioned.

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