



UCR Learning Center

AT209 - A free service for all UCR students

Using Articles: THE

THE is used with a noun:

1. to refer to something that has **already been mentioned**.

Example: An elephant and a mouse fell in love.
The mouse loved **the elephant's** long trunk,
and **the elephant** loved **the mouse's** tiny nose.

2. when **both the speaker and listener know** what is being talked about

Example: 'Where's **the bathroom?**'
'It's on **the first floor.**'

3. to **define or identify a particular person or object**:

Examples: **The man** who wrote this book is famous.
'Which car did you scratch?' **The red one.**
My house is **the** one with a blue door.'

4. to refer to objects that are **unique**:

Examples: **the sun, the moon, the world**

5. before **superlatives** and **ordinal numbers**:

Examples: **the highest** building, **the first** page, **the last** chapter.

6. with adjectives, to refer to a **whole group of people**:

Examples: **the Japanese** , **the elderly**

7. with names of **geographical areas and oceans**:

Examples: **the Caribbean, the Sahara, the Atlantic**

8. with **decades or groups of years**:

Example: she grew up in **the** seventies



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Using Articles: A/AN

Use '**a**' with singular count nouns starting with a *consonant* (*letters that are not vowels*)

Examples: **a** boy, **a** car, **a** house, **a relationship**

Use '**an**' with singular count nouns starting with a *vowel* (*a, e, i, o, u*)

Examples: **an** apple, **an** education, **an** idiom, **an** orange, **an** umbrella

NOTE: **An** before a silent *h* = **an** hour, **an** honor.

A before *u* and *eu* when they sound like 'you': **a** European, **a** university, **a** unit

A or **AN** is used:

1. to refer to something **for the first time:**

An elephant and *a mouse* fell in love.

Would you like *a drink*?

I've finally got *a good job*.

2. to make generalizations about a single thing or person

A banana is yellow. A college student has many responsibilities.

3. when the **speaker knows** about the object **but the listener does not know**

Example: I have **a** new car. (The writer/speaker knows about this car, but the reader/listener does not)

4. when the **listener knows** about the object **but the speaker does not know**

Example: I heard that you have **a** new car. (The writer/speaker has not seen this car, but the listener/reader knows about it)

5. with **singular nouns, after the words 'what' and 'such':**

What *a shame*!

She's such *a beautiful girl*.