

Handout | Definite & Indefinite Articles
Definite & Indefinite Articles

Functional Skills English Entry 3 | Handout

1. What are articles?

Articles are small words before nouns: **a an the**

2. Main rules

Article	Use it when...	Examples
a	one general singular noun starts with a consonant sound	a bus, a pen, a college, a university
an	one general singular noun starts with a vowel sound	an apple, an email, an umbrella, an hour
the	the noun is specific, known or already mentioned	the door, the first lesson, the book I bought
no article	plural/general or some uncountable nouns	books, apples, water, advice, information

3. First mention / second mention

- First time: I saw a dog. The reader does not know which dog yet.
- Second time: The dog was friendly. Now the reader knows which dog.
- Use a/an first, then the when you talk about the same thing again.

4. Quick checks

- Is it one general thing? Use a or an.
- Does the next word start with a vowel sound? Use an.
- Does the reader know exactly which one? Use the.
- Is it plural or uncountable? Do not use a/an.

5. Useful examples

Not quite	Better
an bus	a bus
a apple	an apple
a books	books / some books
an advice	some advice / advice
I bought a phone. A phone was expensive.	I bought a phone. The phone was expensive.