

Vowels and Consonants

Written English has a 26-letter alphabet. Of these 26 letters, 21 are consonants and 5 are vowels. The letter y, can be considered either a consonant or vowel depending on usage.

What are the 5 Vowels in the English Alphabet?

In English there are **five** vowel letters in the alphabet. The proper vowels are a, e, i, o, and u. All English words are written with vowel letters in them. It is said that Y is "sometimes" a vowel, because the letter Y represents both vowel and consonant sounds.

What are the Consonant in the English Alphabet?

The 21 constants are B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, V, W, X, Y, Z

The Articles **A**, **AN**, and **THE**

Articles are words that define a noun as specific or unspecific.

There are two different types of articles: the definite article and the indefinite article.

“**The**” is definite article.

“**A**” and “**an**” are indefinite articles.

Rules for Using Articles

Writers are sometimes unsure whether to use "an" or "a," particularly with abbreviations. (The words "an" and "a" are known as articles.)

1. The article “**A**” is used before singular, countable nouns which begin with consonant sounds. “**A**” is used to refer to non-specific or non-particular nouns.
2. The article “**AN**” is used before singular, countable nouns which begin with vowel sounds. “**An**” is used to refer to non-specific or non-particular nouns.
3. “**THE**” is used to refer to specific or particular nouns.

Here are few examples:

1. If I say, "Let's read **the** book," I mean a specific book.
2. If I say, "Let's read **a** book," I mean any book rather than a specific book.
3. If I say, "I just saw **the** most popular movie of the year." There are many movies, but only one particular movie is the most popular. Therefore, we use **the**.
4. If I say, "I would like to see **a** movie." Here, we're not talking about a specific movie. We're talking about any movie. There are many movies, and I want to see any movie. I don't have a specific one in mind.

5. If I say, "My daughter really wants **a** dog for Christmas." This refers to any dog. We don't know which dog because we haven't found the dog yet.

6. If I say, "My daughter really wants **the** dog for Christmas." This refers to one specific dog which we already found.

7. If I say, "Somebody call **a** policeman!" This refers to any policeman. We don't need a specific policeman; we need any policeman who is available.

8. If I say, "Somebody call **the** policeman!" This refers to a specific policeman. We do need a specific policeman who we believe is available.

9. If I say, "When I was at the zoo, I saw **an** elephant!" Here, we're talking about a single, non-specific thing, in this case an elephant. There are probably several elephants at the zoo, but there's only one we're talking about here.

"THE" FOR SOME COUNTRIES AND SOME CONTINENTS

"THE" is also used with the names of countries and continents. For example,

The USA

The UK

The Bahamas

The Netherlands

The Virgin Island

In some instances we do not use the articles at all, BUT if the country is made up of different parts or if the name is taken from common nouns. For example, you might make statements such as,

1. "She lived in America", or "She is from **the** USA".

2. "They lived in England", or "They are from **the** UK".

3. "My friend is from **the** Netherlands".

USING “A” OR “AN” DEPENDS ON THE SOUND THAT BEGINS THE NEXT WORD

The **sound** of a word's first letter determines whether to use "an" or "a."

- If the word starts with a **vowel** sound, you should use "an." For example,
 - ✓ an apple
 - ✓ an egg
 - ✓ an ice cream shop
 - ✓ an open door
 - ✓ an umbrella
 - ✓ an hour (the “h” is silent)

- If it starts with a **consonant** sound, you should use "a." For example:
 - ✓ a ball
 - ✓ a jacket
 - ✓ a hat
 - ✓ a tree
 - ✓ a uniform (the “u” is pronounced like “yu”)

Check your progress.

Complete the sentence with “a”, “an” or “the”.

“A” or “AN” is general (Referring to one of many)

1. He wants to buy ___ car.
2. She’s eating ___ apple.
3. Do you have ___ bike?
4. She is ___ old woman.

“THE” is specific (Referring to one specific)

5. ___ new Chinese restaurant is very good.
6. I like ___ blue car.
7. I’m reading ___ new book by J.K. Rowling.

Answers:

1. a
2. an
3. a
4. an
5. the
6. the
7. the