

Articles and Plurals

I. Articles

1. Definition

An article is a short monosyllabic word that is used to define if the noun is specific or not. Articles are normally used before nouns and since they are used to speak about the noun, they can be considered as adjectives.

2. Types of Articles

A. Definite Article “The”

We use the definite article “*the*” with words or things that are *specific*. The article “*the*” can be used with *singular* and *plural*, with *feminine* and *masculine*, with *words that starts* with a *vowel* or a *consonant* such as:

Words starts with a vowel	Example: The apple, the orange, the umbrella....
Words starts with a consonant	Example: The book, the car, the table...
Singular masculine words	Example: The boy, the man...
Singular feminine words	Example: The girl, the woman...
Plural words	Example: The doors, the cars, the tables...

- **Other contexts where we use the definite article “The”:**

We use the definite article “the” with:

- A singular or plural noun when it is clear or obvious which person or thing we are talking about:**

E.g: The lamp is next to the desk.

- Anything which we identify immediately:**

E.g: We watched the new Tom Cruise movie last night.

c) **Musical instruments: (The Violin, The Guitar, The Drums, and The Flute).**

E.g: She plays the piano.

d) **Something that is unique or there is only one: (The Sun, The Moon, and The Earth).**

E.g: The earth revolves around the sun.

e) **With adjectives used as a plural collective nouns: (The Blind, The Handicapped, The English, The British, The Poor, The Old, The Young).**

E.g: The British drive on the left-hand side of the road.

f) **Names of rivers, seas, oceans, mountain ranges and deserts: (The Mississippi River, the Mediterranean Sea, the Appalachian Mountain, the Sahara Desert.)**

E.g: John took a boat trip down the Mississippi River during his summer vacation.

g) **Directions or cardinal points: (The west, the south-east, the north-west.)**

E.g: Mary planned a road trip to explore the scenic beauty of the West coast during her holiday break.

B. Indefinite Article “A” and “An”

We use the indefinite articles “a” and “an” with *singular words* or *things* that are *not specific*. For example:

- Give me *a* pen/ Give me *an* orange. (any pen or orange)

Explanation=> This means that we did not specify which kind of (pen or orange) we are talking about.

C. The difference between A and AN

- We use the indefinite article “an” when the word after it begins with a *vowel (a-o-e-u-i)* or with a *silent “h”*.

Example: An apple, an Umbrella, an ice-cream, an Elephant.

An hour (the H is silent)

- However, we use the indefinite article “*a*” when the word after it starts with a *consonant*.

Example: a book, a table, a Clock.

- Or with a word that starts with a *vowel* but sounds like a *consonant* (it is pronounced like a consonant). **Like in the word:** university (the beginning of university sounds like:

YOU-niversity)

- **Other contexts where we use the indefinite article “a” and “an”:**

We use the indefinite article “a” and “an” with:

- a) Singular nouns when it is the first time we refer to a person, animal or thing. For instance in words like:**

- a child, an elephant, a television

- b) We don't use A/AN with possessive pronouns, demonstratives or cardinal numbers. Such as:**

- My shirt is dirty.
- This car is expensive.
- One person is in the reception.

- c) We use ONE (or more) instead of A/AN when the number is important. Like:**

- There is only one exit from the airport.

D. Zero Article “Ø”

In grammar, the term “zero article” refers to the absence of an article (such as “a,” “an,” or “the”) before a noun. This occurs when a noun is used without any article or other determiner. It is called “zero” article because there is no visible article accompanying the noun.

- **Different context on where we use no article in a statement:**

The use of a zero article (no article) is common in several situations in English:

- a) General Statements or Truths:**

E.g: Ø Cats are independent animals.

E.g: Ø Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.

b) Plural and Uncountable Nouns for Generalization:

E.g: I love Ø dogs.

E.g: She enjoys playing Ø music.

E.g: Ø Mexican food is spicy.

c) Names of Meals, Languages, and Academic Subjects:

E.g: She studied Ø mathematics.

E.g: They speak Ø German.

E.g: They are having their Ø breakfast in the Hotel restaurant.

Meals such as: breakfast, lunch and dinner.

d) Before names of towns, cities, states, and countries:

E.g: Ø London is a beautiful city.

E.g: I visited Ø Illinois state last year.

E.g: Ø Chicago is the third largest city in the US.

Except with: The USA, The UK, The Netherlands, The Philippines, these names of countries we use the definite article "*the*" before the name of the country.

e) Names or titles of books and plays:

E.g: I have read Ø Hamlet.

Key point:

It's important to note that the rules for article usage can be complex, and there are exceptions. In some cases, the choice of whether to use an article or not can change the meaning of a sentence. You should always consider the context and the specific meaning you want to convey.

II. Plural in English Words

In general the plural of a noun in English is formed by adding **-s** to the noun. However, in some other cases we add **-es**. Note that there are other exceptions.

1. Add an "s":

We add an **-s** in words like:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Car	Cars	Bird	Birds
Cat	Cats	Student	Students
Dog	Dogs	House	Houses
Book	Books	Pencil	Pencils

2. Add an "es":

If the noun ends in **SS, SH, CH, X** or **Z**, we add **-es** to the noun.

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Glass	Glasses	Watch	Watches
Kiss	Kisses	Match	Matches
Wish	Wishes	Box	Boxes
Crash	Crashes	Fox	Foxes
Church	Churches	Quiz	Quizzes

Note=> with words that end in **Z** sometimes we add an extra **Z** to the plural form of the word (such as with the plural of quiz).

3. Words end with “O” or “Y”:

If the letter before the “O” is a *consonant*, we add “es” to form the plural. For example in words like:

Singular	Plural
Hero	Hero es
Echo	Echo es
Potato	Potato es
Tomato	Tomato es

Exceptions in words like:

- Piano= Pianos.
- Photo= Photos.

If the letter before the “O” is a *vowel*, we add an “s” **only** to form the plural. For example in words like:

- Video= Videos.
- Zoo= Zoos.

If the letter before the “Y” is a *vowel*, we add an “s” **only** to form the plural. For example in words like:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Boy	Boys	Toy	Toys
Day	Days	Guy	Guys
Holiday	Holidays	Way	Ways
Key	Keys	Spray	Sprays

If the letter before the “Y” is a *consonant*, we turn the “Y” into an “I” and then we add “es”.
 For example in words like:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Family	Famil ies	Party	Part ies
Story	Stor ies	Lady	Lad ies
Nanny	Nann ies	Twenty	Twent ies
City	Cit ies	Copy	Cop ies

4. Add “v” + “es”:

To form the plural of a word ending in “F”, turn the **f** into a **v** and add “-es”. Similarly, if a word ends in “FE”, you change the **f** into a **v** and add an -s. For example:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Knife	Kniv es	Wolf	Wolv es
Life	Liv es	Shelf	Shelv es
Wife	Wiv es	Leaf	Leav es
Calf	Cal ves	Thief	Thiev es

Exceptions in words like:

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Roof	Roof s	Cliff	Cliff s	Belief	Belief s
Proof	Proof s	Chief	Chief s	Chef	Chef s

5. Irregular Plural Nouns:

There are a number of nouns that do not follow the plural formation rule. They are irregular and you need to learn them individually because they do not normally have an “S” at the end.

A. Nouns that change vowels:

Many English words become plural by changing their vowels, such as: “oo” to “ee” or “an” to “en”.

Singular	Plural
Foot	Feet
Tooth	Teeth
Goose	Geese
Man	Men
Woman	Women

B. Irregular nouns that change substantially:

Some words change in spelling substantially when made plural. For example words like:

Singular	Plural
Mouse	Mice
Louse	Lice
Ox	Oxen
Child	Children
Person	People

C. Irregular formation of nouns ending in “on”:

These words change their ‘-on’ ending to ‘-a’. For example:

Singular	Plural
Phenomenon	Phenomena
Criterion	Criteria

D. Irregular nouns that do not change at all:

Some English nouns are identical in their singular and plural forms. Many of these are the names of animals. Such as in:

Singular	Plural
Sheep	No Change word remains the same.
Fish	
Moose	
Swine	
Buffalo	
Shrimp	
Deer	
Trout	
Trousers	
Pants	
Shorts	

Examples:

- I have seen several **deer** when walking in the woods near here.
- I went to the department store to buy three **trousers** for my son.
- How many **shrimp** did you catch?
- I can see ten **sheep** in the field.

Aircraft, watercraft, hovercraft, and spacecraft are all the same whether singular or plural.

Example: NASA has made several different types of **spacecraft** in its fifty-nine-year history.

E. Irregular formation of nouns ending in “um”:

Words ending in -um shed their ‘-um’ and replace it with ‘-a’ to form a plural. For example in words like:

Singular	Plural
Dat um	Data a
Bacteri um	Bacteria a
Curricul um	Curricula a
Medi um	Media a

F. Irregular formation of nouns ending in “ix”:

Nouns ending in “-ix” or with “-ex” are changed to “-ices” to form a plural. For example in words like:

Singular	Plural
Inde x	Indice s
Append ix	Appendice s
Vorte x	Vortice s

Key point:

These rules for irregular plural nouns must simply be memorized, although it is helpful to understand the patterns first in order to master them.