Definite and Indefinite Articles

Indefinite Articles *a* and *an*:

An indefinite article is when the word “*a*” or “*an*” is used to introduce an unspecified noun or the name of a general category.

The indefinite article *a* is used before consonant sounds (including “y” sounds):

- I need to buy *a* car.
- After graduation, my goal is to become *a* nurse.
- My sister is *a* vegetarian.
- I will transfer to *a* university.

The indefinite article “*an*” is used before vowel sounds (including nouns starting with a silent “h”):

- Julie is *an* engineer.
- I share *an* apartment with my best friend.
- Jacob arrived *an* hour early to his interview.
- I ate *an* apple for lunch.

When nouns are modified by an adjective, use *a* or *an* depending on the sound of the adjective immediately following the article.

- I am *an* only child.
- She works as *an* independent contractor.
- We slept in *an* old tent.

Definite article *the*:

The definite article “*the*” is used when talking about a specific or particular object that both speaker and listener know.

- *The* bus is down the street.
- *The* mayor is running for re-election.

When mentioning a person or object for the first time use *a* or *an*, then use *the* when repeating that object.

- We watched *a* new tv show. *The* show was very entertaining.
- My neighbor adopted *a* new dog. Unfortunately, *the* dog likes to bite people.