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Grammar – Articles

Correct Use of an Article in English – or Not? (Handout)

Which article – or none? It depends on the type of noun and the context – general (G) or specific (S).

	Correct Sentences		Incorrect Sentences	Correct?	Context:
1.	SINGULAR	[a]	This is a book.	✓	G
2.	COUNTABLE	[an]	This is an book.	✗	
3.	NOUNS	[the]	This is the book.	✗	
4.		[the]	This is the book that I bought.	✓	S
5.		[zero]	This is book	✗	
6.		[some]	This is some book.	✗ *('book' is singular)*	
7.	*other determiner	[o/d*]	This is her book.	✓	S

*Rules: there must be a **determiner** before this type of noun; a / an = 1; an = before a vowel sound; general context = a / an; specific context = the*

8.	PLURAL	[a]	I like a apples.	✗	
9.	NOUNS	[an]	I like an apples.	✗	
10.		[the]	I like the apples.	✗	
11.		[the]	I like the apples from our garden.	✓	S
12.		[zero]	I like apples.	✓	G
13.		[some]	I like some apples.	✓	S
14.		[o/d]	I like those apples.	✓	S

Rule: general context = no article; specific context = the, or other determiner [o/d]

15.	UNCOUNTABLE	[a]	I ate a spaghetti.	✗	
16.	NOUNS –	[an]	I ate an spaghetti.	✗	
17.	REAL	[the]	I ate the spaghetti.	✗	
18.		[the]	I ate the spaghetti with a fork.	✓	S
19.		[zero]	I ate spaghetti.	✓	G
20.		[some]	I ate some spaghetti.	✓	S
21.		[o/d]	I ate that spaghetti.	✓	S

Rule: general context = no article; specific context = the, or other determiner [o/d]

22.	UNCOUNTABLE	[a]	I need a freedom.	✗	
23.	NOUNS –	[an]	I need an freedom.	✗	
24.	ABSTRACT	[the]	I need the freedom.	✗	
25.		[the]	I need the freedom to travel.	✓	S
26.		[zero]	I need freedom.	✓	G
27.		[some]	I need some freedom.	✓	S
28.		[o/d]	I need more freedom.	✓	S

Rule: general context = no article; specific context = the, or other determiner [o/d]

29.	PROPER	[a]	I've been to a Madrid twice.	✗	
30.	NOUNS	[an]	This is an Emily's bicycle.	✗	
31.		[the]	We walked beside the River Thames.	✓	S
32.		[the]	I've never met the Duke of Kent.	✓	S
33.		[zero]	They bought sandwiches at Waitrose.	✓	S
34.		[some]	I can speak some Italian.	✓	S
35.		[o/d]	Jamie arrived in his Saab.	✓	S

Rule: no article unless the noun is part of an adjective + noun phrase, e.g. 'the Atlantic Ocean', or a 'the x of x' phrase, e.g. 'the Statue of Liberty'.