

ARTICLES

The words, A, AN, and THE, are determiners.

In most cases, these words are used to further define the noun to which they are adjacent.

THE = definite article (refers to a specific thing)

Example:

The dog

A & AN = indefinite articles (refers to nothing in particular)

Example:

A hat

An adder

Notice how A is placed before a word beginning with a consonant. In addition, notice how AN is placed before a word starting with a vowel (A, E, I, O, U)

IRREGULARS OF A & AN

Articles may be irregular in some cases. Usually, irregular articles are when the word needing the article begins with a "U" sound.

Words using a strong "U" sound must use the "A" article, whereas words using a weak "U" sound must use the "AN" article.

Example:

A Utah delegate (notice how the article is not AN)

An Umbrella (notice how the article is not A)

Note: Some additional irregular words may exist with regards to the placement of articles. However, they are very few in number.

Example:

An hour

ABBREVIATIONS USING A & AN

In the case of abbreviations, A/AN articles may be used on an individual basis (again, they are irregular).

Example:

A YMCA employee

An FBI Agent

An ACLU member

A UCTE Member

Use "A" for abbreviations beginning with the following letters:

B
C
D
G
J
K
P
Q
T
U
V
W
Y
Z

Example:

A BYU football player
A CIA operative A DUI citation
A GPS system
A JCHO secretary
A KOA Campsite
A PPO plan
A QVC Product
A THC derivative
A UVU student
A VH1 video
A WGNO news bulletin
A YMCA dance
A ZS1 formula racer

Use "AN" for abbreviations beginning with the following letters:

A
E
F
H
I
L
M
N
O
R
S X

Example:

An ACLU lawyer

An EEO officer
An FDIC-insured Account
An OPEC Administrator
An HPV Vaccine An IED
An LLL fraternity brother
An MD in Psychiatry
An NCA membership
An OPEC Administrator
An RCA recording artist
An SEC officer
An X-1 simulator

WHEN NOT TO USE AN ARTICLE

In other cases, articles may not be used (at all):

[The?]

Dinner was wonderful.

Other cases in which an article might not be used:

Idiomatic Expressions [using be and go] - We'll go by first-class.

Seasons/Times of Year - At Christmas, we like to clean the house.

Time of day - Let us hike to the canyon by dawn.

Institutions - He's in church/college/jail/class.

Meals - Dinner was wonderful.

Diseases - Doc is dying of tuberculosis.

Other indefinite articles include qualifiers:

Some, many, most, much, etc.

DETERMINERS

Determiners help to define nouns (in terms of specificity – if it is definite or indefinite, in terms of number, in terms of ownership/possession, etc.).

Example:

A dog

The dog

This dog

That dog

His dog

Her dog

Their dog

One dog

Two dogs

All dogs

Some dogs

Determiners appear before nouns and any adjectives in a noun phrase.

Example:

The beautiful birds are flying away from us.

The noun phrase, THE BEAUTIFUL BIRDS, contains one determiner: THE.

BEAUTIFUL is an adjective. And, BIRDS is the noun.

Remember: a noun phrase is a short group of words containing a noun and any of its modifiers (i.e., adjectives).

Common Determiners:

a, an, the, this, that, these, those, all, both, any, his, her, its, their, one, two, three, four, five, half, one quarter, one half, half, one third, two thirds, my, our

EXCEPTIONS

Complements are not generally considered Determiners unless there is an adjective describing the noun.

Example:

This house is mine.

Notice that MINE is not a determiner. MINE is a pronoun (possessive). However, THIS is a determiner.

Example:

The house is yours.

Notice that YOURS is not a determiner. YOURS is a pronoun (possessive). However, THE is a determiner.

Example:

This house is a blue a-frame.

Notice that BLUE is a determiner as it helps to define the noun.

Example:

This Terrier is my dog.

Notice that MY is a determiner. Moreover, THIS is a determiner.

INTERROGATIVE DETERMINERS

In an interrogative sentence (which is essentially a QUESTION), the WH- words which come before nouns are considered determiners.

Common Interrogative Determiners: Which

What

Where

When

Why

Whose

Example:

Which car is yours?

WHICH is the determiner.

Example:

Whose coat is this?

WHOSE is the determiner.

PRE-DETERMINERS

Sometimes, a determiner precedes (or comes before) another determiner in a sentence. Almost all pre-determiners express quantity.

Example:

All the swimmers competed in the meet.

ALL is the pre-determiner, since it precedes THE.

POST-DETERMINERS

Sometimes, a determiner comes after another determiner in a sentence. Almost all post-determiners express quantity.

Example:

The three crows perched on my porch.

THREE is the post-determiner, since it proceeds THE.

(Side note: MY is a determiner in this sentence).

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS AND POSSESSIVE DETERMINERS

One of the distinctions between a possessive pronoun and a possessive determiner is the question: Does the word help to define a noun? Or, is the word acting on its own to replace/substitute a noun?

For a possessive determiner, a noun always follows the determiner.

Example:

Their footballs need to be inflated. (POSSESSIVE DETERMINER)

THERE is the determiner. FOOTBALLS is the noun.

For a possessive pronoun, the pronoun acts alone.

Example:

This key is yours. (POSSESSIVE PRONOUN)

YOURS is the possessive pronoun.