

General

Articles are the words 'a', 'an' and 'the' that go before nouns. However, you often do not need an article. See below for details;

A/an

You use 'a'/'an' before one of something when you don't know or care which particular one; it is just one of many possibilities.

'An' is used before a vowel (a/e/i/o/u) or vowel sound.

The

You use 'the' before one or more of something, when you know or care which particular one.

Ø (No article)

You don't use an article before an unreal/abstract thing like an idea i.e. something you can't really touch, not an actual object. This is very common in academic writing.

Also, don't use the article before most plurals, (unless you mean particular ones, and then use 'the')

Examples

Look at some examples, and notice how often there is no article;

- ¹ - abstract idea = Ø
- ² - one of many possible forms of recreation = an
- ³ - abstract idea = Ø
- ⁴ - plural = Ø
- ⁵ - plural = Ø
- ⁶ - one specific influence (that of games) = the
- ⁷ - plural = Ø
- ⁸ - abstract idea = Ø
- ⁹ - one specific role (that in a murder case) = the
- ¹⁰ - abstract idea = Ø
- ¹¹ - abstract idea = Ø

Also, notice the alternatives to articles, especially before plurals, words like 'many', 'certain' and 'such'.

A/an

1. They wanted to buy a house.
2. Mr Smith wanted to start a business.
3. There was a computer in every room.
4. An NGO is a non governmental organisation.

The

1. The house on London Road was just what they wanted.
2. After two years, Mr Smith sold the business for £1million.
3. a. The computer in my office is very fast.
b. The computers in my office are very fast.
4. The largest NGO in the area was Oxfam.

Ø (No article)

1. Housing was becoming more expensive.
2. Business with the Far East is increasing.
3. Computers have changed everything.
4. NGOs often focus on particular problems.

Examples

Video gaming¹ is becoming an increasingly important form² of recreation³ for many young people, especially young men⁴.

However, some people⁵ are now beginning to question the influence⁶ of particular games⁷, especially those involving warfare and killing⁸, citing the role⁹ that such games allegedly played in certain murder cases. While some believe that such games are harmless fun¹⁰, others believe they damage society¹¹ and consequently should be banned.