

Revision of Grammar

1- ARTICLES

What is an article? Basically, an article is an adjective. Like adjectives, articles modify nouns.

English has two articles: **the** and **a/an**. **The** is used to refer to specific or particular nouns; **a/an** is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns.

We call **the** = the *definite* article and **a/an** = the *indefinite* article.

For example, if I say, "Let's read **the** book," I mean a *specific* book. If I say, "Let's read **a** book," I mean *any* book rather than a specific book.

INDEFINITE ARTICLES: A AND AN

"A" and "an" signal that the noun modified is indefinite, referring to *any* member of a group. For example:

- "My daughter really wants **a** robe for Eid al-Fitr." This refers to *any* robe. We don't know which robe because we haven't found the robe yet.

- "When I was at the zoo, I saw **an** elephant!" Here, we're talking about a single, non-specific thing, in this case an elephant. There are probably several elephants at the zoo, but there's only *one* we're talking about here.

REMEMBER, USING **A** OR **AN** DEPENDS ON THE SOUND THAT BEGINS THE NEXT WORD. SO...

- **a** + singular noun beginning with a consonant with a consonant: **a** boy; **a** car; **a** bike; **a** zoo.

- **an** + singular noun beginning with a vowel: **an** elephant; **an** apple; **an** orphan.

- **a** + singular noun beginning with a consonant sound: **a** user (sounds like 'yoo-zer,' i.e. begins with a consonant 'y' sound, so 'a' is used); **a** university; **a** unicycle.

- **an** + nouns starting with silent "h": **an** hour.

- **a** + nouns starting with a pronounced "h": **a** horse.

DEFINITE ARTICLE: THE

The definite article is used before singular and plural nouns when the noun is specific or particular. **The** signals that the noun is definite, that it refers to a particular member of a group. For example:

- "**The** robe I bought for my daughter on Eid al-Fitr is very expensive." Here, we're talking about a *specific* robe, the robe that I bought.

- "I saw **the** elephant at the zoo." Here, we're talking about a *specific* noun. Probably there is only one elephant at the zoo.

GEOGRAPHICAL USE OF **THE**

There are some specific rules for using **the** with geographical nouns. Do not use **the** before:

- names of most countries/territories: *Italy, Mexico*; however, *the Netherlands, the Philippines, the United States*.

- names of cities, towns, or states: *Seoul, Manitoba, Miami*.

- names of streets: *Washington Blvd., Main St.*

- names of lakes and bays: *Lake Titicaca, Lake Erie* except with a group of lakes like *the Great Lakes*.

- names of mountains: *Mount Everest, Mount Fuji* except with ranges of mountains like **the Andes** or **the Rockies** or unusual names like **the Matterhorn**.

- names of continents (Asia, Europe).

- names of islands (Easter Island, Maui, Key West) except with island chains like **the Aleutians**, **the Hebrides**, or **the Canary Islands**.

Do use the before:

• names of rivers, oceans and seas: **the Nile, the Pacific**

• points on the globe: **the Equator, the North Pole**

• geographical areas: **the Middle East, the West**

• deserts, forests, gulfs, and peninsulas: **the Sahara, the Persian Gulf, the Black Forest, the Iberian Peninsula**

OMISSION OF ARTICLES

Some common types of nouns that don't take an article are:

• Names of languages and nationalities: *Chinese, English, Spanish, Russian* (unless you are referring to the population of the nation: "**The** Spanish are known for their warm hospitality.")

• Names of sports: *volleyball, hockey, baseball*

• Names of academic subjects: *mathematics, biology, history, computer science*.

2- PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is the tool that allows us to organize our thoughts and make it easier to review and share our ideas. The standard English punctuation is as follows: period, comma, apostrophe, quotation, question, exclamation, brackets, braces, parenthesis, dash, hyphen, ellipsis, colon, semicolon. Below is an explanation of some punctuation that is commonly misused.

Comma ,

Commas are primarily used to aid in clarity and to join two independent clauses with a conjunction. They set off introductory phrases and set off series. They also are used to separate independent and dependent clauses. The Oxford comma is the inclusion of a comma before coordinating conjunction in a series.

- **Examples:** I love reading the Qur'an, so I renew my faith in the remembrance of Allah, and review my thinking about Allah's creatures. I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.

Commas can also be used to note an interjection in a sentence.

- **Example:** The criminal said the judge was an idiot.

The criminal, said the judge, was an idiot ; The criminal is speaking in the first sentence. The judge is speaking in the second.

Apostrophe ‘

Apostrophes are used to mark possession and to mark contractions. They are also used to denote a quotation mark in material that is already being quoted.

Examples: It was Ahmed's car that was hit by the drunk driver.

Ahmed said, "If you come any closer, I will call the police".

Quotation ” “

Quotation marks are used to inform a reader either of something that was spoken or something that is being directly copied from another work. Quotes should also be placed around a word if it is used in a specific context or otherwise bears special attention. In informal applications, quotations can also be used to denote something that is ironic.

Examples: Fatima said, "Is this the prom dress?". Dr. Morjana claims, "The use of violence against Muslims in India is on the rise."

Question and Exclamation ? !

Question and exclamation marks are used to note interrogative and exclamatory sentences. Neither of these punctuation marks are commonly used in academic writing. In general, a writer should not be shouting at the reader in formal writing. The lack of conversation makes any question rhetorical, and revising the question in a statement would be the better course.

Hyphen –

Hyphens are most commonly used to pair compound words. Throw-away, high-speed-chase, merry-go-round, user-friendly.

Dash –

Dashes are generally not in common use but denote a tangent within a thought. There are two kinds of dashes, an “en” dash and an “em” dash. En dashes essentially are the same glyph as hyphens but fill a different purpose. Em dashes are longer, an easy way to remember is that an en dash is the length of an “n” and an Em dash is the length of an “m”.

Example: I think that my dog is a genius — but doesn’t everybody think their pet is?

Dashes are able to substitute for commas and semicolons in the right situation. They can replace commas to note non-essential information or semicolon to note an example. Despite, and because of this versatility dashes should not be frequently employed in your writing. The multitude of applications make dashes easy to overuse taking away from, rather than adding to clarity in your writing.

Note: Dashes can either connect to the surrounding words or be separated by a space, it is an issue of style, be sure to ask your professors if they have a preference.

Parenthesis (), Brackets [], Braces {}

Parenthesis note non-essential information that could be skipped without altering the meaning of a sentence. Brackets are most commonly employed in academic writing within a quotation where the writer is omitting or explaining something. In either case, the writer places a bracket within the quote [explains or places an ellipsis and] closes the bracket to continue the quote.

Braces are used quite rarely and are employed to essentially make a list within a list.

Examples: Cora (the woman who lives down the street from Jane) works as a paralegal.

Professor Brown claims, “She [the novel’s central character] is an example of a strong African-American woman.” Before I go on vacation I need to pack my bags {clothes, toiletries and shoes}, unplug the TV, and close all of the windows.

Ellipsis ...

Ellipsis marks the omission of a word or words. If the omission includes the end of a sentence the glyph has four dots (...) instead of three.

Colon :

Colons make the statement: note what follows. Whatever information that follows the colon must, in some way, explain, prove, or describe what ever came before it. To properly employ a colon, ensure that the clause that follows the mark is able to stand on its own (unless it is a list). Because whatever comes before the colon must be a complete sentence, your writing after the colon is not required to be.

Example: The Bridgekeeper asked me three questions: what is your name, what is your quest, what is your favorite color.

Semicolon ;

A semicolon can be used to join two related main clauses.

Example: James Left a mess at his desk after he left work; Sarah had to clean it up.

Another way to employ a semicolon to join two related main clauses is to include a conjunctive adverb such as: however, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, consequently, or thus. Conjunctive adverbs can also be used with a comma.

Example: James left a mess at his desk after he left work; consequently, Sarah had to clean it up.

The simplest way to deal with two independent main clauses is to make two sentences. If the topic of the two sentences are not related, or if one (or both) of the sentences are already long, joining them could make the sentence too long and be a burden on the reader.

One of the most common applications of semicolons is as a substitute for commas in a list in which commas are required for the things listed.

Example: It's as easy as a,b,c; 1,2,3; doe, rae, mi.

3- TENSES

Verbs come in three tenses: past, present, and future. The past is used to describe things that have already happened (e.g., *earlier in the day, yesterday, last week, three years ago*). The present tense is used to describe things that are happening right now, or things that are continuous. The future tense describes things that have yet to happen (e.g., *later, tomorrow, next week, next year, three years from now*).

The following table illustrates the proper use of verb tenses:

Simple Present	Simple Past	Simple Future
I <i>read</i> nearly every day.	Last night, I <i>read</i> an entire novel.	I <i>will read</i> as much as I can this year.