

Mastering Articles Through Games and Activities

Marcus Burt - Study English in Canada

neverbeaquitter@yahoo.com

1. **Sound** is what determines which article is used, **not** the letter that a word begins with. Observe the examples below:

a unicycle, a uniform, a unicorn	an uncle, an umpire, an ultimatum
a European, a euro, a eulogy	an event, an elbow, an earthquake
a one-hit wonder, a one-time offer	an ocean, an ounce, an office
an hour, an heir, an honest man	a horse, a hospital, a house

Bring it to life with **Article Ball!**

2. **Use a with letters that are preceded by a consonant sound.**

He's a B student His name begins with a K.

Use an with letters that are preceded by a vowel sound.

He got an F on his test. Her name begins with an A.

Read the letters aloud. Write **a** before the letters that begin with a consonant sound, and **an** before the letters that begin with a vowel sound.

__ A	__ H	__ O	__ W
__ B	__ I	__ P	__ X
__ C	__ J	__ Q	__ Y
__ D	__ K	__ R	__ Z
__ E	__ L	__ T	
__ F	__ M	__ U	
__ G	__ N	__ V	

Copyright 2012. This work is the intellectual property of the author. Permission is granted for this material to be shared for non-commercial, educational purposes, provided that this copyright statement appears on the reproduced materials and notice is given that the copying is by permission of the author. To disseminate otherwise or to republish requires written permission from the author.

Initialisms vs. Acronyms

Initialisms

He is **an** NBA player.

She is **an** FBI agent

Acronyms

He is not **a** NASCAR driver.

She is not **a** FEMA agent.

Use a with numbers that are preceded by a consonant sound.

They found a 1-dollar bill.

I have never tried a 12-year old whiskey.

Use an with numbers that are preceded by a vowel sound.

She got an 18 out of 20 on her quiz.

I saw an 80-year old man feeding pigeons.

Bring it to life with **Article Bingo!**

3. Do not pluralize number-noun adjectives

He won the world championship twenty times.

Right: He's a twenty-time world champion boxer.

Wrong: He's a twenty- times world champion boxer.

We watched a movie that was two hours long.

Right: We watched a 2-hour movie.

Wrong: We watched a 2- hours movie.

Bring it to life with **Adjective Number Survey!**

4. Use a, an, or s when referring to a type or kind of uncountable noun.

Wine, cheese, and wood are usually uncountable. However, this changes when referring to type. There are many types of wine, cheese, and wood. Observe:

Merlot is a kind of wine, can be shortened to: Merlot is a wine.

Cheddar is a type of cheese, can be shortened to: Cheddar is a cheese.

Maple is a kind of wood, can be shortened to: Maple is a wood.

Corn is not a kind of fruit, can be shortened to: Corn is not a fruit.

This type of language can often be seen in supermarkets. Supermarkets often advertise that they sell meats, cheeses, wines, foods. What they mean is that they have different kinds of meat, cheese, wine, food, etc., available.

Bring it to life **with It's a kind of ...!**

5. Use a, an, or s with (some) uncountable nouns that refer to specific things or events.

General/Uncountable: Ø	Specific/Countable: a/an/s
History is a difficult subject.	Korea has a long history.
War is dangerous.	Canada has not fought in many wars.
Never touch fire. It's hot!	There was a big fire downtown yesterday.
Experience is more important than education.	I had many wonderful experiences while I was in university.
Everybody loves steak!	I ate a delicious steak last night.
Frank doesn't like coffee.	May I have three large coffees please?
Time is more important than money.	You're going to have a good time on your vacation.

Bring it to life with **To the Top!**

6. Use a or an with the words few or little to show that the quantity of a thing is small, but great enough to be of importance.

Tony made a few good friends while he was in university.
The professor had a few problems with his student's theory.

My grandmother needs a little help shopping this weekend
The boys played a little baseball, and then went home for dinner.

Do not use a with the words few or little when the quantity of a thing is so small that it is almost negligible.

Tony made few good friends while he was in university.
The professor had few problems with his student's theory.

My grandmother is very strong. She needs little help shopping this weekend.
The boys played little baseball because they had to go home for dinner.

Some believe that few/little without an article carry a negative meaning; however, this is not quite true.

Use a with *few* or *little* when the words *just* or *only* are used.

Just a few, only a few, only a little, and just a little are **the same** as few and little in that they are used when the quantity of a thing is so small that it is negligible.

few/little	only a few/a little just a few/a little
The unpopular child has few friends. The student made few mistakes on his test.	The unpopular child has only a few friends. The student made just a few mistakes on his test.
There is little crime in that neighborhood.	There is only a little crime in that neighborhood.
The sick boy ate little soup.	The sick boy ate just a little soup.

Bring it to life with **Few/Little Squares!**

7. Use the definite article when a noun has previously been mentioned.

I bought a ring. **The** ring was expensive.
I'm looking at some chairs. **The** chairs look comfortable.
My teacher gave me some homework. **The** homework was hard.

Bring it to life with **Indefinite/Definite Listen!**

8. Use the definite article with nouns that have a clear association to a previously mentioned noun.

I have a TV, but *the screen* is broken.
Frank lit a cigarette. *The tobacco* tasted cool and fresh.
Sue watched a soccer game last night. *The fans* went crazy when *the home team* scored a goal.

Bring it to life with **Definite Association!**

9. Use the in specially created names and formal titles

Ivan *the* Fool isn't very clever, but he is quite lucky!
Richard *the* Lionheart only spoke French.

Name + the + Adjective	Name + the + Noun
Elizabeth the Second	Peter the Hermit
Henry the Eighth	William the Conqueror
Edward the Magnificent	Stan the Man
Michael the Brave	Bob the Butler
Alfred the Great	Frank the Tank

Bring it to life with **Give the Face a Name** and **Name Your Classmates!**

10. Use the definite article with the names of institutes, bridges, motels, hotels, zoos, buildings, theaters, museums, universities that have the word *of* in their name, companies that have the word *Company* in their name.

I would love to spend just one night in **the** Ritz Carlton Hotel.
The Smithsonian is the world's largest museum.
Have you ever been to **the** Phoenix Zoo?

Don't use the definite article with the names of parks, stadiums, hospitals, universities, companies, malls, gardens, names that contain the word *House*, and names that contain the word *Hall*.

Jeff has a membership at Hart House.
Everybody wants to go to Harvard University.
Millennium Park is Chicago's newest park.

Bring it to life with **Racking It Up!**

11. Do not use the with ordinal numbers and sequence words when describing the steps taken to do something.

First, put toothpaste on your toothbrush. Second, put the toothbrush in your mouth. Last, brush your teeth.
Learning is quite simple. First, open a book. Next, read. Last, repeat as often as necessary

Bring it to life with **Figuring it out!**

Suggested reading for teachers who would like to learn more about articles:

Three Little Words, by Elizabeth Claire

The Article Book, by Tom Cole

And of course; from yours truly....

Mastering Articles Through Games and Activities, by Marcus Burt

Follow me at <http://www.burtmarcus@twitter.com>

Get handouts for in-class use at <http://www.masteringarticles.blogspot.com>

Check out my book at <http://www.masteringarticles.com>

Watch my educational videos at <http://www.greenscreenenglish.com>