An article (abbreviated ART) is a word (or prefix or suffix) that is used with a noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun. Articles specify grammatical definiteness of the noun, in some languages extending to volume or numerical scope. The articles in the English language are the and a/an, and (in certain contexts) some. 'An' and 'a' are modern forms of the Old English 'an', which in Anglian dialects was the number 'one' (compare 'on', in Saxon dialects) and survived into Modern Scots as the number 'ane'. Both 'on' (respelled 'one' by the Normans) and 'an' survived into Modern English, with 'one' used as the number and 'an' ('a', before nouns that begin with a consonant sound) as an indefinite article. Traditionally in English, an article is usually considered to be a type of adjective. In some languages, articles are a special part of speech, which cannot easily be combined with other parts of speech. It is also possible for articles to be part of another part of speech category such as a determiner, an English part of speech category that combines articles and demonstratives (such as 'this' and 'that'). In languages that employ articles, every common noun, with some exceptions, is expressed with a certain definiteness (e.g., definite or indefinite), just as many languages express every noun with a certain grammatical number (e.g., singular or plural). Every noun must be accompanied by the article, if any, corresponding to its definiteness, and the lack of an article (considered a zero article) itself specifies a certain definiteness. This is in contrast to other adjectives and determiners, which are typically optional. This obligatory nature of articles makes them among the most common words in many languages—in English, for example, the most frequent word is the. Articles are usually characterized as either definite or indefinite. A few languages with well-developed systems of articles may distinguish additional subtypes. Within each type, languages may have various forms of each article, according to grammatical attributes such as gender, number, or case, or according to adjacent sounds. == Definite articleEdit == A definite article indicates that its noun is a particular one which is identifiable to the listener. It may be something that the speaker has already mentioned, or it may be something uniquely specified. The definite article in English, for both singular and plural nouns, is the. The children know the fastest way home. The sentence above refers to specific children and a specific way home; it contrasts with the much more general observation that: Children know the fastest ways home. The latter sentence refers to children in general and their specific ways home. Likewise, Give me the book. refers to a specific book whose identity is known or obvious to the listener; as such it has a markedly different meaning from Give me a book. which does not specify what book is to be given. The definite article can also be used in English to indicate a specific class among other classes: The cabbage white butterfly lays its eggs on members of the Brassica genus. However, recent developments show that definite articles are morphological elements linked to certain noun types due to lexicalization. Under this point of view, definiteness does not play a role in the selection of a definite article more than the lexical entry attached to the article. The definite article is sometimes also used with proper names, which are already specified by definition (there is just one of them). For example: the Amazon, the Hebrides. In these cases, the definite article may be considered superfluous. Its presence can be accounted for by the assumption that they are shorthand for a longer phrase in which the name is a specifier, i.e. the Amazon River, the Hebridean Islands. Where the nouns in such longer phrases cannot be omitted, the definite article is universally kept: the United States, the People's Republic of China. This distinction can sometimes become a political matter: the former usage the Ukraine stressed the word's Russian meaning of "borderlands"; as Ukraine became a fully independent state following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it requested formal mentions of its name omit the article. Similar shifts in usage have occurred
in the names of Sudan and both Congo (Brazzaville) and (Kinshasa); a move in the other direction occurred with The Gambia. Some languages also use definite articles with personal names. For example, such use is standard in Portuguese: a Maria, literally: "the Maria" [but this is not possible in Hindi names such as "the Sandeep," " a Sandeep". It also occurs colloquially in Spanish, German and other languages, and is sometimes heard in Italian. In Hungary it is considered to be a Germanism. == Indefinite article Edit == An indefinite article indicates that its noun is not a particular one (or ones) identifiable to the listener. It may be something that the speaker is mentioning for the first time, or its precise identity may be irrelevant or hypothetical, or the speaker may be making a general statement about any such thing. English uses a/an, from the Old English forms of the number 'one', as its primary indefinite article. The form an is used before words that begin with a vowel sound (even if spelled with an initial consonant, as in an hour), and a before words that begin with a consonant sound (even if spelled with a vowel, as in a European). She had a house so large that an elephant would get lost without a map. Before some words beginning with a pronounced (not silent) h in an unstressed first syllable, such as hallucination, hilarious, historic(al), horrendous, and horrific, some (especially older) British writers prefer to use an over a (an historical event, etc.). An is also preferred before hotel by some writers of British English (probably reflecting the relatively recent adoption of the word from French, where the h is not pronounced). The use of "an" before words beginning with an unstressed "h" is more common generally in British English than American. American writers normally use a in all these cases, although there are occasional uses of an historic(al) in American English. According to the New Oxford Dictionary of English, such use is increasingly rare in British English too. Unlike British English, American English typically uses an before herb, since the h in this word is silent for most Americans. The correct usage in respect of the term "hereditary peer" was the subject of an amendment debated in the UK Parliament. The word some is used as a functional plural of a/an. "An apple" never means more than one apple. "Give me some apples" indicates more than one is desired but without specifying a quantity. This finds comparison in Spanish, where the singular indefinite article 'un/una' ("one") is completely indistinguishable from the unit number, except where it has a plural form (unos/unas): Dame una manzana" ("Give me an apple") > "Dame unas manzanas" ("Give me some apples"). However, some also serves as a quantifier rather than as a plural article, as in "There are some apples there, but not many." Some also serves as a singular indefinite article, as in "There is some person on the porch". This usage differs from the usage of a(n) in that some indicates that the identity of the noun is unknown to both the listener and the speaker, while a(n) indicates that the identity is unknown to the listener without specifying whether or not it is known to the speaker. Thus There is some person on the porch indicates indefiniteness to both the listener and the speaker, while There is a person on the porch indicates indefiniteness to the listener but gives no information as to whether the speaker knows the person's identity. == Partitive article Edit == A partitive article is a type of indefinite article used with a mass noun such as water, to indicate a non-specific quantity of it. Partitive articles are used in French and Italian in addition to definite and indefinite articles. (In Finnish and Estonian, the partitive is indicated by inflection.) The nearest equivalent in English is some, although this is considered a determiner and not an article. French: Veux-tu du café ? Do you want (some) coffee? (or, dialectally but more accurately, Do you want some of this coffee?) See also more information about the French partitive article. Haida has a partitive article (suffixed -gyaa) referring to "part of something or... to one or more objects of a given group or category," e.g., tluugyaa uu hal tlaahlaang 'he is making a boat (a member of the category of boats).' == Negative article Edit == A negative article specifies none of its noun, and can thus be regarded as neither definite nor indefinite. On the other hand, some consider such a word to be a simple determiner rather than an article. In English, this function is fulfilled by no, which can appear before a singular or plural noun: No man has been on this island. No dogs are allowed here. No one is in the room. == Zero article Edit == The zero article is the absence of an article. In languages having a definite article, the lack of an article specifically indicates that the noun is indefinite. Linguists interested in X-bar theory causally link zero articles to nouns lacking a determiner. In English, the zero article rather than the indefinite is used with plurals and mass nouns, although the word "some" can be used as an indefinite plural article. Visitors end up walking in mud. == Variation among languages Edit == Articles are found in many Indo-European, Semitic, and Polynesian languages but formally are absent from some large languages of the world, such as Indonesian, Japanese, Hindi and Russian. Linguists believe the common ancestor of the Indo-European languages, Proto-Indo-European, did not have articles. Most of the languages in this family do not have definite or indefinite articles; there is no article in Latin, Sanskrit, nor in some modern Indo-European
languages, such as the families of Slavic languages (not including Bulgarian, Macedonian and Torlakian, which are rather distinctive among the Slavic languages in terms of grammar) and Baltic languages. Although Classical Greek has a definite article (which has survived into Modern Greek and which bears strong resemblance to the German definite article), the earlier Homeric Greek used this article largely as a pronoun or demonstrative. Articles developed independently in several language families. Not all languages have both definite and indefinite articles, and some languages have different types of definite and indefinite articles to distinguish finer shades of meaning; for example, French and Italian have a partitive article used for indefinite mass nouns, whereas Colognian has two distinct sets of definite articles indicating focus and uniqueness, and Macedonian uses definite articles in a demonstrative sense, with a tripartite distinction (proximal, medial, distal) based on distance from the speaker or interlocutor. The words this and that (and their plurals, these and those) can be understood in English as, ultimately, forms of the definite article the (whose declension in Old English included thaes, an ancestral form of this/that and these/those). In many languages, the form of the article may vary according to the gender, number, or case of its noun. In some languages the article may be the only indication of the case. Many languages do not use articles at all, and may use other ways of indicating old versus new information, such as topic–comment constructions. In the above examples, the article always precedes its noun (with the exception of the Arabic tanween and the Hebrew ha-). In some languages, however, the definite article is not always a separate word, but may be suffixed, attached to the end of its noun as a suffix. For example, Albanian: zog, a bird; zogu, the bird Aramaic: , peace; , the peace Note: Aramaic is written from right to left, so an Aleph is added to the end of the word. Bengali: "Boi", book; "Boiti/Boita/Boikhana" : "The Book" Romanian: drum, road; drumul, the road (the article is just "I", "u" is a "connection vowel" Romanian: vocală de legătură) Icelandic: hestur, horse; hesturin, the horse Persian: sib, apple; sibe, the apple Danish: stol, chair; stolen, the chair Swedish and Norwegian: hus, house; huset, the house; if there is an adjective: det gamle (N)/gamla (S) huset, the old house Bulgarian: стол stol, chair; столът stolǎt, the chair (subject); стола stola, the chair (object) Macedonian: стол stol, chair; столот stolot, the chair; столов stolov, this chair; столон stolon, that chair Example of prefixed definite article: Hebrew: , transcribed as yeled, a boy; , transcribed as ha-yeled, the boy A different way, limited to the definite article, is used by Latvian and Lithuanian. The noun doesn't change but the adjective can be defined or undefined. In Latvian: galds, a table / the table; balts galds, a white table; baltais galds, the white table. In Lithuanian: stalas, a table / the table; baltais stalas, a white table; baltais stalas, the white table. == EvolutionEdit == Articles have developed independently in many different language families across the globe. Generally, articles develop over time usually by specialization of certain adjectives. Joseph Greenberg in Universals of Human Language describes "the cycle of the definite article": Definite articles (Stage I) evolve from demonstratives, and in turn can become generic articles (Stage II) that may be used in both definite and indefinite contexts, and later merely noun markers (Stage III) that are part of nouns other than proper names and more recent borrowings. Eventually articles may evolve anew from demonstratives. === Definite articlesEdit === Definite articles typically arise from demonstratives meaning that. For example, the definite articles in the Romance languages—e.g., el, il, le, la—derive from the Latin demonstratives ille (masculine) and illa (feminine). The English definite article the, written þe in Middle English, derives from an Old English demonstrative, which, according to gender, was written se (masculine), seo (feminine) (þe and þeo in the Northumbrian dialect), or þæt (neuter). The neuter form þæt also gave rise to the modern demonstrative that. The ye occasionally seen in pseudo-archaic usage such as "Ye Olde Enlishe Tea Shoppe" is actually a form of þe, where the letter thorn (þ) came to be written as a y. Multiple demonstratives can give rise to multiple definite articles. Macedonian, for example, in which the articles are suffixed, has столот (stolot), the chair; столов (stolov), this chair; and столон (stolon), that chair. These derive from the Common Slavic demonstratives *тъ "this, that", *овъ "this here" and *почт that over there, yonder respectively. Colognian prepositions articles such as in dat Auto, or et Auto, the car; the first being specifically selected, focused, newly introduced, while the latter is not selected, unfocused, already known, general, or generic. Standard Basque distinguishes between proximal and distal definite articles in the plural (dialectally, a proximal singular and an additional medial grade may also be present). The Basque distal form (with infix -a-, etymologically a suffixed and phonetically reduced form of the distal demonstrative ha-/hai-) functions as the default definite article, whereas the proximal form (with infix -o-, derived from the proximal
demonstrative hau-/hon-) is marked and indicates some kind of (spatial or otherwise) close relationship between the speaker and the referent (e.g., it may imply that the speaker is included in the referent): etxeak ("the houses") vs. etxeok ("these houses [of ours]"), euskaldunak ("the Basque speakers") vs. euskaldunok ("we, the Basque speakers"). === Indefinite articlesEdit === Indefinite articles typically arise from adjectives meaning one. For example, the indefinite articles in the Romance languages—e.g., un, una, une—derive from the Latin adjective unus. Partitive articles, however, derive from Vulgar Latin de illo, meaning (some) of the. The English indefinite article an is derived from the same root as one. The -n came to be dropped before consonants, giving rise to the shortened form a. The existence of both forms has led to many cases of juncture loss, for example transforming the original a napron into the modern an apron. The Persian indefinite article is yek, meaning one. == See alsoEdit == English articles Al- (definite article in Arabic) Definiteness Definite description == ReferencesEdit == == External linksEdit == The Definite Article, ‘The’: The Most Frequently Used Word in World’s Englishes

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