Articles

Articles signal and introduce nouns. There are two types of articles: definite and indefinite.

The definite article (the) refers to a particular noun.
The cat ate the food from the bowl.

Indefinite articles (a & an) refer to a general noun or one not already mentioned.
Sam noticed a cat eating food from a bowl.
Brooks saw an airplane in the sky.

Using Indefinite Articles

Deciding whether to use a + an depends on the first sound of the word that follows the article.

Use a for the following situations:
a + singular noun beginning with a consonant: a ball; a cat; a bike; a zoo
a + singular noun beginning with a consonant sound: a user; a university; a unicycle.
a + nouns starting with a pronounced ‘h’: a horse

Use an for the following situations:
an + nouns starting with a silent ‘h’: an hour
an + singular noun beginning with a vowel: an elephant; an egg; an apple; an idiot; an orphan