



DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

Second lesson – Deuxième leçon

CONTENTS

I. The indefinite article

- Introduction
- 1. Forms
- 2. Choosing an indefinite article
- 3. Basic meanings & uses
 - Notes on indefinite article's omission

II. The definite article

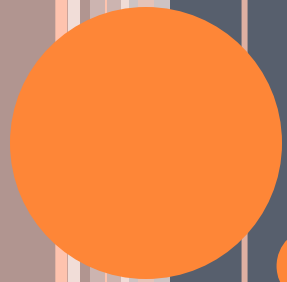
- Introduction
- 1. Forms
- 2. Choosing a definite article
 - Nouns starting with a vowel or H mute.
 - Notes on H mute
- 3. Basic meanings & uses



ARTICLES : AN INTRODUCTION

- In French, a noun is usually introduced by a determiner.
- Articles (**indefinite**, **definite** and **partitive**) form one of the main groups of determiners in French.
- In this lesson, we introduce **the forms and main uses of indefinite and definite articles**.





THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

I. THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

- The indefinite article in French has **three forms**.
- The singular indefinite articles **un** (m.) or **une** (f.) are the English *a/an*.
- The plural **des** corresponds to *some* has the same form for both genders.



1.FORMS

The indefinite articles

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
Masculine	Un	Des
Feminine	Une	Des



2. HOW TO CHOOSE INDEFINITE ARTICLES

- Which indefinite article to use depends on two things: **the noun's gender and number.**



- The noun's gender
(masculine or feminine)

The noun's number
(singular or plural)

Un garçon a boy

Des garçons (some) boys

Une fille a girl

Des filles (some) girls



3. BASIC MEANINGS AND USES

- In both cases – singular or plural – **indefinite articles refer to an unspecified person or thing.**



Singular forms:
masculine- feminine

It is translated as *a/an*

Il y a ***un garçon*** dans la classe.

There is a boy in the classroom.

Il y a ***une fille*** dans la classe.

There is a girl in the classroom.

Plural form:
Masculine - feminine

It is translated as *some*

Il y a ***des garçons*** dans la classe.

There are (some) boys in the classroom.

Il y a ***des filles*** dans la classe

There are (some) girls in the classroom.



BUT...

The indefinite article must be used when the person's profession or religion is preceded by a qualifying word (adjective):

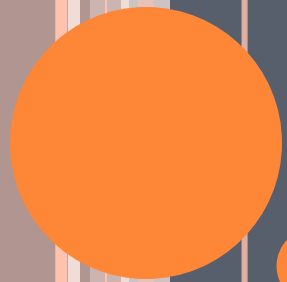
- *Il est un excellent professeur.*

He is an excellent professor

- *Elle est une excellente étudiante.*

She is an excellent student





THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

II. THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

- There are four forms of the definite article in French
- The singular definite articles **le**, **la**, **l'** and the plural **les**,
- All of which correspond to *the* in English.



1. FORMS

Definite articles

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	Le	Les
Feminine	La	Les
Before vowel or h	L'	Les



2. HOW TO CHOOSE DEFINITE ARTICLES

- The use of definite article depends on three different things:
 - The noun's **gender** (feminine or masculine)
 - The noun's **number** (singular or plural)
 - The noun's **first letter** (vowel or consonnant)



Singular forms

Masculine - feminine

Le garçon [the] boy

La fille [the] girl

Note : definite articles are often omitted in English.

Plural form

Masculine and feminine

Les garçons [the] boy

Les filles [the] boy

Note : definite articles are often omitted in English.



2.1 THE NOUN + VOWEL OR MUTE H

- The definite articles **le** and **la** contract to **l'** (masculine or feminine) when a noun starts with a vowel or mute **H**.
- If the noun (masculine or feminine) is plural, use **les**.



Nouns starting with a vowel

Singular:

L'ami (masculine)
[the] friend

L'amie (feminine)
[the] friend

Plural:

Les amis
[the] friends

Les amies
[The] friends

Nouns starting with H mute

Singular:

L'homme (masculine)
[the] man

L'histoire (feminine)
[the] history

Plural:

Les hommes
[The] men

Les histoires
[The] histories



2.2 THE H MUTE

- The **h muet** or *mute h*, is never pronounced but it affects determiners in two ways.
- As you have already noticed, there is a contraction of the definite articles **le/la** before nouns such a
 - **[Le] homme → l'homme.**
 - **[La] histoire → l'histoire**



HOWEVER...

- There are **some exceptions** where there is **no contraction**.
- The reason for this is etymological.
- The best way to remember which ones allow contractions and which do not, is to learn the words themselves.



OBSERVE:

H nouns from Latin: use l'

H nouns from Germanic languages : use le

L'heure

[the] time

L'horaire

[the] timetable

L'hôtel

[the] hotel

L'hypothèse

[the] hypothesis

La honte

[The] shame

Le héros

[The] hero

La Hollande

Holland

Le hasard

[The] coincidence



3. BASIC MEANINGS AND USES

- Use definite articles to indicate :
 - a **specific** noun
 - a **general** meaning of the noun



A DEFINITE ARTICLE

Introduces a specific
noun

L'histoire de la France
The history of France

La faculté de Sciences
The faculty of Sciences

Indicates a general
meaning of a noun

La vie est belle!
Life is beautiful!

L'amour est compliqué!
Love is complicated!



C'est tout pour aujourd'hui!

Au revoir!

Merci!

