

Articles

An **article** is a word used to modify a noun, which is a person, place, object, or idea. Technically, an article is an **adjective**, which is any word that modifies a noun. Usually adjectives modify nouns through description, but articles are used instead to point out or refer to nouns. There are two different types of articles that we use in writing and conversation to point out or refer to a noun or group of nouns: definite and indefinite articles.

A, an--- Indefinite articles

The--- Definite Article

Uses of 'an'

- Before the words beginning with vowel sounds. For e.g. an owl, an egg.
- Before words beginning with silent 'h'. For e.g. an hour, an honourable man, an heir, an honest man.
- F,H,L,M,N,R,S,X are letters that are not vowels but begin with vowel sounds. For e.g. 'M' has the sound of 'em'. So 'an' is used before the abbreviations beginning with vowels or these letters. For e.g. an MLA, an NCC officer, an X-ray, an SP etc.

Uses of 'a'

- In the sense of one. For e.g. He couldn't speak a word to save himself.
- With 'one'(because one begins with sound of 'w'). For e.g. a one man show, a one rupee note.
- Before words beginning with consonant sound. For e.g. a boy, a box.
- With vowel letters having consonant value. For e.g. a university, a unit, a European language. (all these begin with consonant sound of 'yu').
- With units and rates. For e.g. He sold rice ten rupees a kilo.
- In exclamatory expression before singular countable noun. For e.g. What a pretty girl! For e.g. How sunny a day!

- When two subjects or articles are thought of as a single unit. For e.g. He was ready with a cup and saucer. For e.g. A cigarette is made up of a paper and tobacco.
- With certain expressions of quantity. For e.g. a lot of, a dozen, a great deal of, a couple of.
- With a person's name to indicate that the person is perhaps unknown to the person addressed. For e.g. A Mr. Roy is at the door.
- With a special meal to celebrate something or in someone's honour. For e.g. I called my friends to a lunch to celebrate my success. For e.g. A dinner was arranged to welcome the principal.

Uses of 'the'

- It is used when we speak of a particular person or thing already referred to. For e.g. The boy near the taps is my brother.
- When a singular noun represents a whole class. For e.g. The mango is considered the king among fruits.
Note: The nouns 'man' and 'woman' do not take 'the' before them. For e.g. Man is the greatest of the God's creation.
- With the names of:
Gulfs: The Persian gulf
Rivers: The Kaveri river
Oceans: The Indian ocean
Islands: The Andaman & Nicobar island
Mountains: The Himalayas
- **Certain books: the Vedas, the Puranas, the Bible etc**
- **Musical instruments: the flute, the violin, the tabla**
- **The inventions: the television, the radio**
- **Parts of body.** For e.g. He was wounded in the leg. For e.g. They hit him on the head.
- Religious groups: the Sikhs, the Hindus
- **Names enforcing law: the Police, the Navy, the Air Force**
- **Political parties: the BJP, The congress**
- **Aeroplanes, ships, trains etc: the jet airways, the titanic, the shatabdi express**

- **Before the names of an empire, dynasty or historical event: the Gupta dynasty, the old stone age, the first world war, the American revolution**
- **Clubs, foundations etc: the lion's club, the science foundation**
- **Before common nouns denoting unique things: the sun, the earth, the world**
- **With superlatives** For e.g. He is the best boy in the class. For e.g. Prizes would be given for the most outstanding performances.
- **With ordinals (denoting a numerical order in a series)** For e.g. He took the first taxi that came his way. For e.g. Our class is on the second floor.
- **Before the comparative degree** For e.g. The more they get, the more they want. For e.g. He is the cleverer of the two.

CLICHÉ

Definition:

Cliché refers to an expression that has been overused to the extent that it loses its original meaning or novelty. A cliché may also refer to actions and events that are predictable because of some previous events.

All examples of cliché are expressions that were once new and fresh. They won popularity in the public and hence have been used so extensively that such expressions now sound boring and at times irritating, due to the fact that they have lost their original colour. For instance, the phrase “as red as a rose” must have been a fresh and innovative expression at some point in time, but today it is considered universally as a cliché, and does not make such an impact when used in everyday or formal writing.

Expressions that are not Clichés

It is important to keep in mind that constant reuse of expressions does not necessarily create a cliché. Typical expressions that are used almost at all times in formal ceremonies, festivals, courts, etc. are not considered cliché examples; rather they befit such occasions, and are regarded as more appropriate. Following are a few examples:

- “I now pronounce you man and wife” (Wedding Ceremony)

- “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” (Oath-taking ceremony)
- “Happy Birthday!”

Similarly, certain epithets like “reverend” and “father” are attached to the names of church officials. Besides, people of the royal family are addressed with epithets “Your Grace,” “Your Highness,” or “Your Royal Highness.” Such expressions are part of proper etiquette, and do not fall under the category of cliché.

Common Cliché Examples

Example #1

In describing time, the following expressions have turned into cliché:

- *in the nick of time* – to happen just in time
- *only time will tell* – to become clear over time
- *a matter of time* – to happen sooner or later
- *at the speed of light* – to do something very quickly
- *lasted an eternity* – to last for a very long time
- *lost track of time* – to stop paying attention to time

Example #2

In describing people, these expressions have turned into cliché:

- *as brave as a lion* – describes a very brave person
- *as clever as a fox* – describes a very clever person
- *as old as the hills* – describes an old person or idea
- *fit as a fiddle* – describes a person in a good shape
- *as meek as a lamb* – describes a person who is too weak and humble

Example #3

In describing various sentiments, a number of expressions have turned into cliché:

- *frightened to death* – to be too frightened

- *scared out of one's wits* – to be too frightened
- *all is fair in love and war* – to go to any extent to claim somebody's love
- *all is well that ends well* – a happy ending reduces the severity of problems that come in one's way
- *every cloud has a silver lining* – problems also have something good in them
- *the writing on the wall* – something clear and already understood
- *time heals all wounds* – pain and miseries get will heal, with the passage of time
- *haste makes waste* – people make mistakes when rushing

Example #4

Below is a list of some more common clichés:

- *They all lived happily ever after*
- *Read between the lines*
- *Fall head over heels*
- *Waking up on the wrong side of the bed*
- *The quiet before the storm*
- *Between the devil and the deep blue sea*

Function of Cliché:

Anton C. Zijderveld, a Dutch sociologist, throws light on the function of cliché in the following excerpt, taken from his treatise *On Clichés*:

“A cliché is a traditional form of human expression (in words, thoughts, emotions, gestures, acts) which – due to repetitive use in social life – has lost its original, often ingenious heuristic power. Although it thus fails positively to contribute meaning to social interactions and communication, it does function socially, since it manages to stimulate behaviour (cognition, emotion, volition, action), while it avoids reflection on meanings.”

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a word or phrase incorrectly separated from the word it modifies. Correcting misplaced modifiers is easy: just move the modifier closer to the word it modifies. Because word order is often important to the meaning of a sentence, a modifier, be it a phrase or a word, should be placed as close as possible to the word it modifies. Many modifiers can be moved to various positions in the sentence, but if ambiguity results, the word order must be corrected. The most frequent mistakes that occur with modifiers are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

Example with correctly placed modifier:

- Loud singing annoys you quickly.
Here, it is clear that you are quickly annoyed.

Examples with misplaced modifier:

- Loud singing quickly annoys me.
Here, it is unclear if quickly modifies loud singing or if it modifies how fast you are annoyed.

Misplaced modifiers may be single words, phrases, or clauses.

1 The following words are often misplaced: almost, only, just, even, hardly ,not, nearly, merely.

Most often, these words are placed in front of the words they modify.

Misplaced: My sister only has two children.

Correct: My sister has only two children.

2. Here is an example of a **misplaced phrase**

Misplaced: The little girl screamed at the library at her mother.

Correct: At the library, the little girl screamed at her mother.

3. Here is an example of a **misplaced clause**.

Misplaced: I held the ticket tightly in my hand that my friend gave me.

Correct: I held the ticket that my friend gave me tightly in my hand.

Squinting Modifiers (A word or phrase placed in a position so that it modifies either a preceding word or the word after it)

Example: Reading a book frequently will change the whole course of a man's life.

Revision: Reading a book will frequently change the whole course of a man's life.

4. **Split Infinitives** (A modifier of one or more words placed between the "to" and the root verb)

Example: It was my custom to at least once a month visit my grandmother.

Revision: It was my custom to visit my grandmother at least once a month.

Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** is a modifier that lacks a word or group of words to modify. Usually, a dangling modifier is found near the beginning of the sentence and starts with either a *verb + ing* or a *to + verb* phrase.

For e.g. *Sighing with sadness, the expensive shoes were returned to the salesman.*

Who sighed with sadness, the expensive shoes or the salesman? Neither: I did, but I am not in the sentence.

There are three simple steps to correcting a dangling modifier:

STEP 1: Find the modifier: *sighing with sadness*

STEP 2: Decide what word the modifier was intended to modify: *I*

STEP 3: Revise the sentence. To correct a dangling modifier, you cannot simply rearrange the sentence. You must add the word that the dangling modifier describes:

Sighing with sadness, I returned the expensive shoes to the salesman.

Noun Pronoun Agreement

- Pronoun one must be followed by one's
E.g. One must do one's duty.
- When 'one' means number--- pronoun will be 3rd person singular(he, she, it)
E.g. One of them has given up his/ her studies.
- 'Everyone' or 'everybody' must be followed by his.
E.g. Everyone should love his country.
- Each, every, anyone, anybody must be followed by singular pronoun.
E.g. Anyone can do this if he tries.
- Verbs like enjoy, avail, pride, resign, apply, absent, assert etc. are followed by reflexive pronouns.
E.g. We enjoyed ourselves at the party.
E.g. He resigned himself to the fate.

- When 1st, 2nd or 3rd person singular pronouns are used together (I, you, he), they are placed in the order you, he and I.
E.g. You, he and I are neighbours.
- When 1st, 2nd or 3rd person are plural pronouns (we, you, they) they are placed in the order we, you, they.
E.g. We, you and they must work together.
- If there are only two persons including 1st, then 1st person is written first.
E.g. I and Neha have done this job.
- 'Who' denotes subject and 'whom' denotes object.
E.g. Who do you think did the job?
E.g. Whom did you abuse?
- 'Whose' is used for persons and 'which' is used for lifeless objects.
E.g. This is the table which I was talking about.
E.g. He married Sunita whose father is a politician.
- 'Which' conveys additional information and 'that' explains a certain thing.
E.g. The old schoolhouse, which is one of my favourite historical sites to visit, is in dire need of renovation.
E.g. The type of antibiotic that the doctor prescribed made me nauseous.
E.g. Our home, which has 4 bedrooms, is located in the Caribbean.
E.g. Our home that has 4 bedrooms is located in the Caribbean.

The first sentence discusses the location of your only home and it just so happens to have 4 bedrooms. The second sentence points out that the home you own with 4 bedrooms is located in the Caribbean, which means you have more than one home.

- The expressions only, any, it is, all superlatives take 'that' in place of 'which'.

E.g. He is the only man that can do it.

E.g. It is the same watch that was stolen.
- 'Each other' is used for two and 'one another' is used for more than two.

E.g. Akash and Ashish help each other.

E.g. They help one another.

- When the same person is the subject and the object, it is necessary to use reflexive pronouns.

E.g. I cut myself while chopping vegetables.

Prepositions

A preposition is defined as a word which is placed before a noun or a pronoun or a noun equivalent to show some relationship between that and some other word present in the sentence. In other words, A **preposition** is a word or set of words that indicates location (*in, near, beside, on top of*) or some other relationship between a noun or pronoun and other parts of the sentence (*about, after, besides, instead of, in accordance with*). A preposition isn't a preposition unless it goes with a related noun or pronoun, called the object of the preposition.

Prepositions of time:

At

- Point of time: at 5 '0' clock, at noon , at midnight
- Festival: at Christmas, at Diwali
- Mealtime: at lunch, at dinner
- Indefinite period: at dawn , at night

On

- Day: on Friday, on Monday
- Date: on 13th of March
- Day+ morning, evening, afternoon, night: on Saturday night

In

- Season: in spring, in winter

- Year: in 2009
- Month: in March
- Part of the day: in the morning

In, Within

- In is used at the end of the time. For e.g. I'll be back in two hours.
- Within is used before the end of time. For e.g. I'll be back within two hours.

Other prepositions showing time

- About 5 'o' clock
- Before 5 'o' clock
- After 5 'o' clock
- Until 5 'o' clock
- By 5 'o' clock
- From 5 'o' clock to 8 'o' clock

Since and For

- Since: point of time For e.g. since 7am, since 1999
- For: period of time For e.g. for an hour, for a long time

Prepositions of place:

- At: For e.g. He stood at the end of the queue.
- On: For e.g. The books are lying on the shelf.
- In: For e.g. There are many pictures in this book.
- Over: For e.g. The fan was just over my head.

- Under: For e.g. I lay just under the tree.
- Above: For e.g. His head could be seen above the water.
- Below: For e.g. His body was below the water.
- Behind: For e.g. Just behind the tree is the gate.
- In front of: For e.g. There is a tree in front of the gate.
- Beside: For e.g. Please come and sit beside me.
- Between: For e.g. Mathura is between Delhi and Agra.
- Among: For e.g. The dog hid among the bushes.
- Opposite: For e.g. There is a park opposite our house.
- Near: For e.g. Place this chair near the window.

At, On

- There is somebody at the door.
- There is a notice on the door.

At/In/On

- *In reference of 'Time'*
- **At** is used for a precise time.
- **In** is used for months, years, centuries and long periods.
- **On** is used for days and dates.

At/In/On

- *In reference of 'Place'*
- **At** is used for a point. For e.g The car stopped at the traffic lights.
- **In** is used for an enclosed space. For e.g She is in the room.
- **On** is used for a surface. For e.g The book is on the table.

At shows stationary position or existing state while **In** shows movement.

Examples i. She is at home.

ii. The train is in motion.

At is used for small place, town etc. while **In** for big place, town, city, country etc.

Examples i. He lives at Alwar in Rajasthan.

ii. A temple is situated at Madurai in Chennai.

At is used for Point of time, and **In** is used for Period of time.

Examples i. The train will arrive at six in the morning.

ii. He will meet you in the morning.

In/Into

- **In** shows the existing state of things, while **Into** shows movement.

Examples i. He jumped into the river.

ii. There are three students in the class.

To/Into

- In the direction of-- Turn **to** the right.
- Destination --I am going **to** Jaipur.
- Until From --Monday **to** Friday; five minutes **to** ten
- Compared with-- They prefer hockey **to** soccer.
- With indirect object-- Please give it **to** me.

- As part of infinitive-- I like **to** ski; he wants **to** help.
- In order to --We went **to** the store to buy soap.
- To the inside of --We stepped **into** the room.
- Change of condition-- The boy changed **into** a man.

On/Onto

- **On** can be used for both existing position and movement.
Example (a) He was sitting on his bag.
Onto is used when there is movement involving a change of level.
Examples (a) People climbed onto their roofs.
(b) He lifted her onto the table.

On/In

- The label is on the bottle.
- The ink is in the bottle. (In shows interior of anything). Also used in expressions like in fact, in general, in the long run etc

Beside/Besides

- Beside and Besides have altogether different meanings.
Don't confuse beside with besides. beside = at the side of
Example: a) He was sitting beside Sarla.
- **b)** besides = in addition to / as well as
- **Example** He has a car besides a motor cycle.

Among/Amongst

- Both have the same meaning. Either of them can be used if followed by ‘the’. If followed by a word, beginning with a vowel ‘amongst’ be used.

Examples

- He distributed the toffees among/amongst the poor.
- He distributed the toffees amongst us

With/By

With is used for instruments, and **By** is used for agents.

- Examples** (a) The snake was killed by him with a stick.
(b) The letter was written by Suresh with a pencil.

For

It shows purpose. Let’s go for a cup of coffee

It shows a general period. We were there for three weeks

Used in expressions like --for a time being, for the first time, for a moment

From

It suggests the source of something. I have received a gift from my father.

In expressions like: from bad to worse, from day to day from morning till night.

Other Prepositions with examples

He threw the ball towards me.

He took the books out of the bag,

The book fell off the table.

She got tired as she climbed up the stairs.

She fell down the stairs.

The road passes through the village.

I jumped over the wall into the garden.

They went for a walk along the river.

There were no boats. So he had to swim across the river.

He told us about his past experiences.

Redundancy

Sometimes people tend to clutter up their writing with unnecessary words or phrases. Good writing is concise and informative. When something is redundant it means that it is excessive, unnecessary, or superfluous. Redundancy usually involves repeating something or adding information that is completely unnecessary.

Not all usages of redundancy are bad. In fact, there are many instances where redundancy is considered to be okay, such as when a person is using it for emphasis. In most occasions though, especially when a person is being redundant without realizing it, it's bad.

Common Examples of Redundancy

There are dozens of redundant phrases that people use constantly without realizing. Below you will see some redundant phrases and why they are repetitive.

- Actual fact – A fact is by definition something that has already been confirmed to have happened.

- Forever and ever – Ever is completely unnecessary as it just serves as a duplicate of forever.
- Major breakthrough – A breakthrough is already major and significant. There is no reason to say that it is major.
- 9:00 a.m. in the morning or 9:00 p.m. in the evening – People commonly say the time, then add a.m. or p.m. and then add in the morning or evening to the phrase. Again this is redundant due to the fact that a.m. and p.m. already informs the reader.
- Past history – By definition, history is someone’s past. Saying that a person “checked your past history” or “Look into his past record” is redundant since these things have already happened and are by definition an occurrence in the past.
- Plan ahead – When a person makes a plan, they are already preparing for the future. There is no reason to add ahead after you tell someone to plan.
- Postpone until later – To postpone something already means to reschedule it at a later time. The “until later” part of the phrase is unneeded. A good remedy for this phrase would be “Postpone until tomorrow morning” or something else that is more specific than later.
- Unexpected surprise – By definition a surprise is going to be unexpected. No one expects a surprise.
- Unintentional mistake – When someone makes a mistake it is already unintentional. Unintentional is unnecessary. Another common way people use this form of redundancy is with the phrase accidental mistake.
- Written down – You may have heard the phrase “Write this down” or “It’s written down”, but when something is written it has been taken down. There is no need for you to add the word down to it.
- Still remains – “Yet she still remains” this phrase is redundant because remains means that something is still there. Still doesn’t add anything to the sentence.

How to Identify Redundancy in Your Own Writing

Even though you understand redundancy, you may still have some problems identifying it in your own writing. Spotting redundancy is a big part of editing and it can help you turn your writing into something that is much more concise and easy to read.

One of the first things you want to do is read through your entire paper. If something doesn’t sound or look right, then read over it again and see if you can spot any problems. Don’t fixate on it too long, but ask yourself if every word in the paragraph, sentence, or phrase is necessary. If you feel that you can take something out and the paper will retain its meaning then do so. Even if you aren’t sure, take the word or phrase out anyway and see how it works. If it doesn’t fix the problem, just add it back.

You may not be able to spot every problem in your writing though, especially immediately after you’ve written it. A good thing to practice is take a few hours after you’ve completed the paper and do something else. Some people will wait until the following day to look at

their writing and see if they can identify any problems then. It can be really beneficial to take a good hard look at your work with a fresh set of eyes.

Fixing Redundancy in Your Writing

Now that you know how to identify redundancy, you can explore the ways that you can fix it. Remember that redundancy involves superfluous words, which means that you will more than likely be cutting the phrase short. Below are some redundant sentences and examples of ways that you can fix them.

- Redundant: There were three teachers that taught each and every hour at school today.
- Fixed: There were three teachers that taught every hour at school today.

Notice that the phrase “each and every” was redundant in the first sentence? Each and every essentially mean the same thing in this instance, so you don’t have to use it.

- Redundant: Everything being equal, the members of the Student Council will think about the argument, and come up with a final decision through a vote next week at an open meeting.
- Fixed: The members of the Student Council will have a final decision next week at an open meeting after a vote.

Although the above sentence didn’t have a particular phrase that needed to be fixed, the wording was still superfluous and unnecessary. As stated before, redundancy doesn’t just mean that the words repeat, but that they add unnecessary length to the sentence or phrase.

Not All Redundancy is Bad

Sometimes redundancy can be a good thing. As mentioned before, redundancy can be used for emphasis. You’ve probably seen a lot of redundant phrases in advertisements. People will write words such as “Free gift” and “Added Bonuses” to emphasize how good something may be.

This is only in specific situations though. In other situations writing concisely is incredibly important. One form of writing that requires you to write concisely is technical writing.