1. a/an (the indefinite article)

The form a is used before a word beginning with a consonant, or a vowel with a consonant sound:

- a man
- a book
- a university
- a European
- a one-way street

The form an is used before words beginning with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) or words beginning with a mute h:

- an apple
- an island
- an uncle
- an egg
- an onion
- an hour

or individual letters spoken with a vowel sound:

- an L-plate
- an MP
- an ‘x’

2. Use of a/an

a/an is used:

A. Before a singular noun which is countable (i.e. of which there is more than one) when it is mentioned for the first time and represents no particular person or thing:

- I need a visa.
- They live in a flat.
- He bought an ice-cream.

B. Before a singular countable noun which is used as an example of a class of things:

- A car must be insured
- (All cars/Any car must be insured)

C. With a noun complement. This includes names of professions:

- A child needs love
- (All children need/Any child needs love)

D. In certain expressions of quantity:

- a lot of
- a couple
- a great many
- a dozen (but one dozen is also possible)
- a great deal of

E. With certain numbers:

- a hundred
- a thousand

Before half when half follows a whole number;

1. kilos = one and a half kilos or a kilo and a half

But . kg = half a kilo (no a before half), though a + half + noun is sometimes possible:

- a half-holiday
- a half-portion
- a half-share

With 1/3, ., 1/5 etc. a is usual: a third, a quarter etc., but one is also possible.

3. Omission of a/an

a/an is omitted:

A. Before plural nouns.

- a/an has no plural form. So the plural of a dog is dogs, and of an egg is eggs.

B. Before uncountable nouns

- Water, milk (no a water, a milk)

C. Before names of meals, except when these are preceded by an adjective:

- We have breakfast at eight.
- He gave us a good breakfast.