Use of Articles: A and An
(For use by students of English as a second language)

I. Explanation:

1. A and AN are used before singular, countable nouns.

   A car      an orange car
   An egg     a fried egg

2. A and AN suggest “one of many”.

   “A car” is one of many cars

3. AN is used before words beginning with vowel sounds.

   An aunt
   An elk
   An individual
   An opal
   An umpire
   An hour (silent h)

4. Use a when “u” sounds like “you”.

   A unit
   A useful tool
   A unique answer

   But: an uncle
   An unusual answer

5. A or AN is required even if an adjective precedes the noun.

   It’s an uncomfortable chair.

6. A and An are generally not used with non-count nouns (furniture, coffee, honesty, gasoline).

7. A and AN are not used with other determiners.

   I need A this (my, another, one) book.
8. Use A or AN for **first mention** of a person, object, or idea within a sentence or paragraph.

   A blue car turned into our neighbor’s driveway. I had never seen the car before.

9. Use a or AN to emphasize a countable representative of a group. (It has the meaning of “any”.)

   A good mechanic is hard to find.
   AN eagle preys on other animals.

10. Use A or AN with non-count, abstract nouns when a general reference meaning “a kind of” is intended.

    He showed AN intelligence that confused his parents.

11. Use a or AN following verbs in certain idioms.

    Do a favor    play A joke on
    Tell A lie    take A look at
    Make a living make A mistake
    Take A trip    become A reality
    Take A picture 85c A gallon

II. EXERCISE:

**Directions:** Supply a, an, or **no article** in each blank.

1. He does not have ______ single regret about what he did.

2. He made _____ bad mistake in his report.

3. New York City has ___ large population.

4. She wants to become ___ nurse.

5. ____ youngster was hit by ___ car while he was crossing the street.

6. ____ engineer must have ___ good knowledge of mathematics and physics.

7. Please give me ____ information about this university.

8. Isn’t tomorrow ___ holiday?
9. The boy has always wanted to have ___ dog.

10. She has such ___ expensive furniture!

11. What ____ fine weather we are having.

12. The electric light was ___ important invention.

13. Everyone would like to be free from ___ pain.

14. ___ candidate tries to gain political power by convincing people to vote for him.

15. They are planning to buy ___ expensive camera.

16. He makes ____ living by writing books.

17. Will you please take ____ look at these figures?

18. ____ bee is ____ insect.

19. ____ uniform was left on that chair.

20. Please give me ____ one hour to rest.

21. He has ____ aversion to any kind of work.

22. _____ nitrogen is _____ element.

23. He deserves ____ admiration for his work.

24. She played ____ joke on her brother.

25. ____ silver is used for ____ money.

26. She had _____ homework to finish by 6:00.

27. That lawyer gave her ____ very good advice.

28. She enjoys ____ popularity which is well deserved.

29. He was driving 40 miles ____ hour.

30. That was ____ unfair decision.
III. ANSWERS

1. A
2. A
3. A
4. A
5. A, a
6. An, a
7. ______
8. A
9. A
10. ______
11. ______
12. An
13. ______
14. A
15. An
16. A
17. A
18. A, an
19. A
20. ______
21. An
22. ______, an
23. ______
24. A
25. ______, ______
26. ______
27. ______
28. A
29. An
30. An

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