

The Indefinite Article 'A'/'An' - One/Ones

'A'/'An'

We use a/an:

- ◆ with singular countable nouns when we talk about them in general.  
e.g. I want to buy a dress. (any dress)
- ◆ with the verbs to be and have (got).  
e.g. Mary has (got) a dog. It's a German Shepherd.
- ◆ before Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms when we refer to an unknown person.  
e.g. A Mrs Jones called you this morning. (A person that we don't know.)
- ◆ to show: a) price in relation to weight (two pounds a kilo), b) distance in relation to speed (80km an hour) and c) frequency (twice a week).

We do not use a/an:

- ◆ with uncountable nouns or plural countable nouns. We use some instead of a/an.  
e.g. We need some milk and some flour.  
They bought some flowers.
- ◆ before an adjective if it is not followed by a noun.  
e.g. This ring is expensive.  
But: This is an expensive ring.

A(n)/One

- ◆ We use a/an to refer to an unspecified thing with the meaning 'any one'. We use one when we are counting, to put emphasis on number.  
e.g. He bought a tie. (We are not talking about a specific tie.)  
e.g. He bought one tie. (He didn't buy two ties.)
- ◆ We use one with the words day, week, month, year, winter, morning, night, etc. or with a specific day or month to say when something happened, usually in

narration.

e.g. One summer, the family decided to go to Tahiti.  
One Tuesday, Kate was walking home from work.

We can use one day to refer to the future.

e.g. One day, you will regret this.

- ◆ We use one or one of ... when we mean one person/thing out of many. It usually contrasts with another/other(s).

e.g. One bus was full, but the others were empty.

One of my colleagues is from Italy.

- ◆ We use a/an or one with no difference in meaning when counting or measuring distance, weight, time, etc.

e.g. I paid a/one hundred pounds for this bracelet.

We bought a/one carton of milk.

They spent a/one month cruising down the Nile.

One/Ones

- ◆ We use one in the singular and ones in the plural to avoid repeating the noun when it is clear what we mean.  
e.g. My house is the one with the red front door.
- ◆ We use a/an with one when there is an adjective before one.  
e.g. I want to buy a jacket. I want a leather one.  
BUT: I want to buy a jacket. I want one with a fur collar.
- ◆ We use one/ones with this/that.  
e.g. I don't like this pair of shoes, but I like that one.
- ◆ We use which one(s) in questions.  
e.g. I like the yellow blouse best. Which one do you like?

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Fill in a, an, one or ones.

- 1 I'm making ...a... sandwich. Would you like .....?
- 2 There was only ..... sandwich left. All the others had been eaten.
- 3 We saw ..... giraffe and ..... alligator at the zoo.
- 4 These biscuits are nicer than the ..... I normally buy.
- 5 She paid ..... thousand pounds for her car.
- 6 ..... day, I will buy a house of my own.
- 7 I'd love ..... car like that ..... over there.

- 8 ..... of my brothers is ..... policeman.
- 9 I'm looking for ..... dress. I'd like a blue .....
- 10 I heard ..... amusing joke yesterday.
- 11 I like these three pairs of trousers. Which ..... do you like best?
- 12 Simon enjoys swimming. He goes to his local pool three times ..... week.
- 13 I'm tired. I need ..... rest.
- 14 ..... Mr Green came to see you. He's waiting in your office.
- 15 We had ..... exciting holiday. It was better than the ..... we had last year.