

Advanced Study Guide for the Complete Use of “A” and “An”

1. If a word begins with *a*, use **an** in front of it. **No exceptions.**
an apple, **an** artist, **an** achievement, **an** Asian country, **an** actor

2. If a word begins with *e*, use **an** in front of it.
an elephant, **an** excellent dinner, **an** egg, **an** extra bed

Exception: Any word beginning with *eu* takes **a** in front of it:
a European tour, **a** euphemism, **a** eucalyptus tree

3. If a word begins with *i*, use **an** in front of it. **No exceptions.**
an ice cream cone, **an** intelligent answer, **an** icicle, **an** igloo, **an** Italian car

4. If a word begins with *o*, use **an** in front of it.
an orange, **an** oily rag, **an** original idea, **an** Oriental meal

Exceptions:

The two words *one* and *once* take **a** in front of them.
a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity **a** one-car family

5. If a word begins with *u*, use **an** in front of it.
an unusual box, **an** utterly wonderful movie, **an** untroubled mind

Exceptions:

If the word begins with a long *u* sound (sounds like the word *YOU*), then use **a** in front of the word.

a university, **a** union, **a** uniform, **a** United States citizen

6. If a word begins with a silent *h*, use **an** in front of it.
an hour, **an** honest person, **an** herb

7. Use **an** in front of these letters of the alphabet (when used as isolated letters) because of the way they are sounded: **A E F H I L M N O R S X**
My last name begins with **an** M. Write **an** X in the blank. No student wants **an** F for a course grade.

8. Use **an** in front of the prefix *un-*.
an untied shoe, **an** untrue response, **an** unattractive person

Be careful!

Be sure that the u-n is the **prefix** *un-* (rhymes with *fun*) and not merely the two letters *u* and *n* side by side.

For example: **an** unappreciative child

(un = prefix meaning “not”)

a university student

(un = the two letters *u* and *n*)