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, a university student
(un = prefix meaning “not”) (un = the two letters u and n)

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