

## Lesson 155: Indefinite Article / Articolo indeterminativo

The indefinite article in English, "a" or "an," has the following equivalent in Italian:

masculine		feminine	
<i>Nouns starting with vowels and consonants</i>	un	<i>Nouns starting with a consonant</i>	una
<i>Nouns starting with s + consonant, gn, ps, y and z</i>	uno	<i>Nouns starting with a vowel</i>	un'

Here are some rules for using the indefinite article in Italian:

1. **Un** is used with all masculine nouns that begin with a vowel and start with a consonant.
2. **Uno** is used with all masculine nouns that start with an s + consonant, ps, z, y, and gn.
3. **Un'** is used with all feminine nouns that start with a vowel.
4. **IMPORTANTE**: It is a common error (even with native speakers) to use un' for masculine nouns, too. Note the differences:

**un'**artista (f.) | **un** artista (m.)

5. Una is used before all other feminine nouns not starting with a vowel

Some examples of nouns and their indefinite articles:

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**una** mela | *an apple*  
**un'**opinione | *an opinion*  
**uno** studente | *a student*  
**uno** psicologo | *a psychologist*  
**uno** gnao | *a meow*  
**uno** yogurt | *a yogurt*  
**uno** zaino | *a backpack*  
**un** aereo | *an airplane*

Note that the article **is omitted** with exclamations and with the adjective, **mezzo**(half):

Che genio! | *What a genius!*  
Che macchina! | *What a car!*  
Ho comprato mezzo etto di formaggio. | *I bought 50 grams of cheese.*

With professions and the verb, essere, **the definite article is also omitted**, unless the profession is modified by an adjective:

Sono medico. | I am a doctor.  
Sono **un** medico **gentile**. | I am a kind doctor.

**NB:**The indefinite article has no proper plural, although some consider the partitive construction to be an indefinite plural construction.

It is worth mentioning that the adjective, **buono**, functions much like the indefinite article when it is modifying a noun. It has four forms: **buon (un), buono (uno), buona (una),**

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**buon' (un')**. Make sure that you are using the correct form of buono in your writing. Take note of the following differences:

Il **buon** liceo si trova vicino a Napoli. | *The good high school is near Naples.*

Il liceo vicino a Napoli è **buono**. | *The high school near Naples is good.*

**Buono**, when used as a predicate adjective (that is, by itself), has the four standard adjectival forms:

buono, buoni, buona, buone

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