

Mundus Spanish Course

Lección 4

Artículos y sustantivos

Articles

Articles are mostly words used with nouns to specify the grammatical definiteness of a noun. Definiteness gives a noun the characteristic of **identifiability** in a given context or discourse from other (non-definite) nouns. Despite being a feature common in most Western European languages, many do not have this feature, most notably Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Chinese, etc.

“Suddenly, we were approached by **a** stray dog. **The** dog looked ravenous.”

Definite Articles

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	El	Los
Feminine	La	Las

Examples:

- “El perro” – “the dog”
- “Los gatos” – “the cat”
- “La mariposa” – “the butterfly”
- “Las casas” – “the houses”

Definite Articles

Exception:

Feminine nouns that start with a stressed “a” vowel use the masculine definite article “el” instead of “la”.

Some examples are:

El agua <-> las aguas

El águila <-> las águilas

El aula <-> las aulas

If there is an adjective between the article and the noun, the article changes to the feminine one.

Example:

La mejor agua (the best water)

Indefinite Articles

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	Un	Unos
Feminine	Una	Unas

- “Un perro” – “a dog”
- “Una mariposa” – “a butterfly”

IMPORTANT: Bear in mind that in Spanish “un” and “uno” are not the same word. “Uno” is the number “one” and also an indefinite pronoun. The plural form has the meaning in English as “some”:
“Unas mariposas” would then mean “some butterflies”

The same rule of **exception** can be applied to feminine nouns that start with a stressed “a” vowel: Un águila <-> unas águilas

Neutral Article “lo”

It is only used in abstractions such as:

“Lo bueno” – “The good”

“Lo malo” – “the bad”

It exists only in singular form!

Nouns

- As with the articles, there are two genders in Spanish: masculine and feminine. Spanish is highly regular in this respect and one can accurately guess the article of a noun according to its ending.
- **Nouns that end in –a, -ción / -sión, -z and –ad are mostly feminine.**
- **All other nouns, which mostly end in –o, are masculine.**
- Since Spanish has no neutral gender, non-living things and abstract concepts also take male and female genders.
- Proper names in Spanish follow also the general rule that those ending in –a are feminine and others ending in –o are masculine. Modern names may not follow this rule.

Nouns (cont.)

- Besides the gender, Spanish nouns are also inflected according to number (singular and plural).
- This is done mostly by adding an –s or –es at the end of the word.

Nouns (cont.)

- Masculine inflections:

	-o	-e	-ma	-or	consonant	acc. vowel
Singular	gato	perfume	Idioma	amor	árbol	colibrí
Plural	gatos	perfumes	idiomas	amores	árboles	colibríes

- Feminine inflections:

	-a	-ad	-ción /sión	-z
Singular	casa	libertad	canción	luz
Plural	casas	Libertades	canciones	luces

Nouns (cont.)

- **Exceptions:** as in all languages, Spanish presents exceptions to the above mentioned rules.
- **Examples:**
- La mano, la llave, la fé, la flor
- El día, el agrícola, el pez