Introduction

Nouns are generally used together with their articles in French. The article tells us the gender (masculine, feminine) and number (singular, plural).

There are indefinite articles *(un, une, des)* and definite articles *(le, la, les)*.

Léna est une copine de Lara etla copine de François.

Léna a acheté une glace. Elle aime beaucoup la glace.



Indefinite Articles

The indefinite articles are *un* (masculine) and *une* (feminine). We use indefinite articles:

* when we’re referring to an unspecified thing

*Example:*

Léna est une copine de Lara. (one of several)

* when we mention something in a text for the first time *(introductory)*

*Example:*

Léna a acheté une glace.

To Note

French also has an indefinite article for the plural, similar to the English “some”: *des*.

*Example:*

Léna et Lara ont acheté des glaces.

Definite Article

The definite articles are *le* (masculine), *la* (feminine) – sometimes also *l’* (when the following word begins with a vowel or a mute *h*) – and *les* (plural). We use the definite article:

* when we’re talking about something specific

*Example:*

Léna est la copine de François. (the only one – they’re a couple)

* when we have already mentioned something or assume it to be generally known

*Example:*

Elle aime beaucoup la glace.

Articles and Prepositions

Definite articles and prepositions are often combined into one word.

| preposition | preposition + article | example |
| --- | --- | --- |
| à | à + le = au | la glace au chocolat |
| à | à + les = aux | fais attention aux enfants |
| de | de + le = du | parler du jeu |
| de | de + les = des | c’est la table des enfants |

L’article partitif (partitive article)

For unspecified things or indefinite amounts, French uses something called a partitive article: *Partitifde* plus article. (In English, we don’t use an article in this situation.)

In French, the partitive article is used:

* for uncountable nouns

*Example:*

Il faut acheter de l’eau et du café.

* for types of sports (with *faire*) and instruments

*Example:*

Il fait du foot.  
Il joue de la flûte.

No Article

We generally don’t use an article for:

* city or town names

*Example:*

Ils habitent à Paris.

* days of the week (unless referring to something that regularly happens on a certain day)

*Example:*

Nous l’avons vu lundi.

* names of months

*Example:*

Je suis né en juillet.

* expressions using*en* + a means of transport

*Example:*

As-tu voyagé en train ou en voiture?

* professions, in an unspecified context

*Example:*

Elle est laborantine.  
*but for a specified person:* Je connais la laborantine.  
*or a particular characteristic:* C’est une bonne laborantine.

* beliefs/religious affiliations

*Example:*

Il est catholique.  
*but for a specified person*: C'est le catholique qui va tous les jours à l’église.  
*or a particular characteristic*: C’est un bon catholique.

With the partitive article, we use *de* without an article:

* for amounts, except *bien, la plupart, une partie, la majorité* and*la moitié*

*Example:*

J’ai bu beaucoup de café.

* after a negation

*Example:*

Il n’a plus d’eau dans son verre.

We don’t use an article for specific verbs or expressions with *de* either.

*Example:*

J’ai besoin d’argent.

J’ai envie de fraises.