


1. forms
2. uses
3. 'de' after the negative
4. before a plural adjective
5. with adjectives of profession, nationality, and religion



forms

In French, few nouns can stand alone. Most need to be introduced or 'determined' by an article. As in English, an article is characterized as either **definite** ('the') or **indefinite** ('a', 'an'). In French, articles are also **masculine** or **feminine**, and **singular** or **plural**, according to the gender and number of the noun they determine. Here are the **indefinite articles** in French:


 masculine singular: un	Tex est un tatou. Joe-Bob est un écureuil.	Tex is an armadillo. Joe-Bob is a squirrel.
feminine singular: une	Bette est une chatte. UT est une université	Bette is a cat. (female) UT is a university.
plural: des	des tatous des écureuils des chats des universités	(some) armadillos (some) squirrels (some) cats (some) universities

In the examples above, listen carefully to the difference in pronunciation of **un** and **des** before words beginning with a consonant (**un** tatou, **des** tatous) and before a words beginning with a vowel sound (**un** écureuil, **des** écureuils). These are examples of **liaison**.




uses

As the English 'a' 'an' or 'some', the indefinite articles **un**, **une**, **des** refer to nouns which are non-specific. **Un** or **une** may also indicate quantity, 'a' or 'an' in the sense of 'one.' Contrast the use of the indefinite and definite articles in the first two sentences below. The indefinite plural **des** is always expressed in French, but its English equivalent 'some' is often omitted.

 Joe-Bob et Corey ont une chambre dans une résidence universitaire à Austin.	Joe-Bob and Corey have a (one) room in a residence hall in Austin.
Ils ont la chambre numéro 1735 dans la résidence Jester.	They have the room #1735 in the Jester residence hall.
Joe-Bob et Corey sont des camarades de chambre.	Joe-Bob and Corey are roommates!

'de' after the negative


In a negative sentence, the indefinite articles **un**, **une**, **des** are replaced by **de** or **d'**:

 Tex: Joe-Bob, tu as un chien?	Tex: Joe-Bob, do you have a dog?'
Joe-Bob: Mais non! Je n'ai pas de chien. Je suis un écureuil.	Joe-Bob: No, I don't have a dog. I'm a squirrel.
Tex: Corey, tu as des amis?	Tex: Corey, do you have friends?

Corey: Mais non! Je n'ai pas **d'**amis. Je suis un cafard.

Corey: No, I don't have **any** friends. I'm a cockroach.

However, following the verb **être**, the indefinite articles **un, une, des** remain unchanged in the negative:

 Edouard: Joe-Bob, c'est **un** écureuil. Ce n'est pas **un** tatou!

Edouard: Joe-Bob is a squirrel. He is not an armadillo.


Tex et Tammy, ce sont **des** tatous. Ce ne sont pas **des** escargots.

Tex and Tammy are armadillos. They are not snails.

before a plural adjective

Before a plural **adjective** which precedes a noun, **des** usually becomes **de**. If the adjective comes after the noun, **des** does not change to **de**.



 Edouard: Tex et Tammy sont **de** charmants amoureux.

Edouard: Tex and Tammy are charming lovers.

Bette: Ah bon? Ce ne sont pas seulement **de** bons amis?

Bette: Really? They are not just good friends?

Edouard: Tu ne trouves pas que Tex et Tammy sont **des** tatous parfaits l'un pour l'autre?


Edouard: Don't you think that Tex and Tammy are armadillos who are perfect for each other?

Bette: Absolument pas!

Bette: Absolutely not!

with adjectives of profession, nationality, and religion

Professions, nationalities and religions are considered adjectives in French and need no article after the verbs **être** and **devenir**.

 Edouard: Tex devient professeur; il est américain; il n'est pas catholique.

Edouard: Tex is becoming a professor. He is American. He is not Catholic.

Listen to the dialogue:

 Bette et Tammy parlent entre femmes.

Bette and Tammy are talking woman-to-woman.

Bette: Je n'ai pas **de** véritables amis! Tout le monde pense que je suis **une** méchante chatte.

Bette: I have no real friends! Everybody thinks that I am a wicked cat.

Tammy: Mais non Bette! Toi et moi nous sommes **de** vieilles amies!

Tammy: That's not true Bette! You and I are old friends!

Bette: Oui, mais toi tu as **un** petit ami tandis que moi je n'ai pas **de** petit ami!

Bette: Yes, but you have a boyfriend whereas I don't have any boyfriend!

Tammy: Tu sais Bette, avoir **un** petit ami ce n'est pas toujours **une** partie de plaisir, surtout quand il s'appelle Tex!

Tammy: You know Bette, having a boyfriend is not always a fun thing, especially when he's called Tex!



textercises

fill in the blanks

Fill in the blank with the correct indefinite article: un, une, des, de.

1. Tex : Je voudrais _____ café (masc.).
2. Tammy et Tex sont _____ amis.
3. Tammy et Fiona sont _____ bonnes amies.
4. Tammy est _____ fille (fem.) merveilleuse.
5. Tex est _____ prof. intelligent.
6. Fiona est _____ fourmi (fem.) loyale.
7. Joe-Bob et Corey sont _____ animaux ridicules.
8. Tex, Trey, et Rita sont _____ tatous typiques au Texas.
9. Corey est _____ ami de Tex.
10. Tex est _____ tatou (masc.) amusant.
11. Bette est _____ étudiante à UT.
12. Joe-Bob est _____ étudiant à A&M.