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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:


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

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.

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

'de' after the negative


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

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

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.