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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:


 masculine singular: <b>un</b>	Tex est <b>un</b> tatou. Joe-Bob est <b>un</b> écureuil.	Tex is an armadillo. Joe-Bob is a squirrel.
feminine singular: <b>une</b>	Bette est <b>une</b> chatte. UT est <b>une</b> université	Bette is a cat. (female) UT is a university.
plural: <b>des</b>	<b>des</b> tatous <b>des</b> écureuils <b>des</b> chats <b>des</b> 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 <b>une</b> chambre dans <b>une</b> résidence universitaire à Austin.	Joe-Bob and Corey have <b>a (one)</b> room in <b>a</b> residence hall in Austin.
Ils ont <b>la</b> chambre numéro 1735 dans <b>la</b> résidence Jester.	The have <b>the</b> room #1735 in <b>the</b> Jester residence hall.
Joe-Bob et Corey sont <b>des</b> 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 <b>un</b> chien?	Tex: Joe-Bob, do you have <b>a</b> dog?
Joe-Bob: Mais non! Je n'ai pas <b>de</b> chien. Je suis <b>un</b> écureuil.	Joe-Bob: No, I don't have <b>a</b> dog. I'm <b>a</b> squirrel.
Tex: Corey, tu as <b>des</b> 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!



texercises

### 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.