

# Class Notes

## The Indefinite Article

### Forms of the Indefinite Article

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<b>un hombre</b>	<b>una mujer</b>
Plural	<b>unos hombres</b>	<b>unas mujeres</b>

The usual English equivalent of **unos, unas** is *some, several, a few*.

1. The usual forms of the indefinite article in Spanish are shown in the chart above.
2. The masculine article **un** is usually used with singular feminine nouns beginning with a stressed **a** or **ha**, for example **un ancla**, *an anchor*, **un hacha**, *an ax*.<sup>1</sup>

### Uses of the Indefinite Article

In general, the indefinite article is used in Spanish essentially the same way it is in English. However, it is not used in some cases in Spanish where it is in English. This is unlike the definite article, which is used more in Spanish than in English. The following are some of the most important differences.

1. The singular indefinite article is never used in exclamations with **qué**.  
¡Qué película más aburrida!                      *What a boring movie!*  
¡Qué lindo día!    *What a nice day!*
  2. The singular indefinite article is never used before **cien, mil, or otro**.  
Me regalaron cien dólares.                      *They gave me a hundred dollars.*  
Tengo mil cosas que hacer.                      *I have a thousand things to do.*  
Otro vaso de agua, por favor.                      *Another glass of water, please.*
- Cierto, a certain, may occur with or without the indefinite article.  
Buscaba cierto libro. or Buscaba un cierto libro.      *He was looking for a certain book.*
3. The following sentences illustrate the use of **tener, con, and sin** with and without singular indefinite **un(a)**.
    - a. with **un(a)**:  
No tengo **una** (sola) corbata.  
*I don't have a (single) tie.*
    - b. without **un(a)**:  
No tengo corbata.  
*I don't have a tie.*

Encontramos una casa con **un** baño.                      Encontramos una habitación con baño.  
*We found a house with one bathroom.*                      *We found a room with a bath.*

Salió sin **un** sombrero.                      Salió sin sombrero.  
*He left without a (single) hat.*                      *He left hatless.*

In the (a) sentences, **un(a)** emphasizes the number one, a single tie, bathroom, hat, or whatever. In the (b) sentences, without **un(a)**, the emphasis is on the mere presence or absence – not the number – of the objects in question.

<sup>1</sup>The names of the letters **a** and **h** are exceptions: **una a, una hache**.

4. The indefinite article is normally omitted after **ser, parecer, considerar**, and other “linking” verbs before an unmodified noun indicating nationality, profession, rank, and other kinds of groups or categories.

Juan es peruano

*Juan is (a) Peruvian.*

María es arqueóloga.

*María is an archeologist.*

Pablo se considera católico.

*Pablo considers himself (a) Catholic.*

¿Es perro o gato?

*Is it a dog or a cat?*

In these sentences the predicate nouns (**peruano, arqueóloga**, etc.) simply place the subject in one category or another. On the other hand, the indefinite article is included if the predicate noun is *modified* so that the subject is described in some particular way, rather than merely categorized.

Juan es **un** peruano que conocí en Lima  
el año pasado.

*Juan is a Peruvian that I met in Lima  
last year.*

María parece ser **una** arqueóloga excelente.

*María seems to be an excellent archeologist.*