

Articles

How can I be sure whether to use *a*, *an* or *the*? The use of articles is based on whether a noun is countable or uncountable and whether we have a specific noun or just any noun in mind.

1. If a noun is a SINGULAR COUNT noun, it MUST ALWAYS have **an article**.

Incorrect: Give me pencil. Correct: Give me a pencil. OR Give me the pencil.

2. If a noun is a PLURAL COUNT noun or NONCOUNT noun, it MUST ALWAYS have **the** if it refers something specific.

The books you are looking for are on the table. The water in the Caribbean Sea is beautiful.

3. If a PLURAL COUNT or NONCOUNT is something general, it should not have an article.

Books are expensive now. Water is important for everyone.

4. If you are introducing new information to the reader, use the indefinite article **a**. After this information has already been introduced to the reader once, you should use the article **the**.

I saw a man going into a store. The store was on Main Street. The man was wearing a black coat. The coat was long and looked very old.

5. If you are comparing something to everything else using the -est form of an adjective (tallest, best, last, most.. .), you must use the article **the**.

It is the highest mountain in the world. She is the best singer in Japan.

6. Use **the** with a proper noun if any ONE of the following are true:

- It is plural.
- It has the word *of*.
- It includes a political word (republic, union, kingdom..)
- It includes a geographical word (river, ocean, sea, peninsula...)
- It is the name of a geographical place. (the Northwest, the South...)
- It includes a word that is an organization or group for education, business, or government.
exception: university/college

7. Change a to an if the first sound of the noun begins with a vowel sound: an apple, an hour

