

Articles

Articles always come before nouns. There are two types:

1. “The” is a definite article. It is used with nouns that name specific things.
2. “A/an” is an indefinite article. It is used to refer to unspecific or general things.

Article	When do I use?	Examples	When not to use it?
The	A specific person/place/thing. Can be used for both singular and plural nouns.	Person: I need to speak to the manager . Place: I am going to the mall . Thing: The chairs in my living room are brown.	DON'T USE “the” ...when the noun is not specific ...when a noun is describing a general category
	When the noun has been previously mentioned, so the reader has enough info to identify the noun specifically.	A car sped past us. My sister noted that the car was red.	... when the noun has not been previously mentioned or is new
	Geographic location: Specific names of rivers, oceans, seas, forests, deserts, global points (the North Pole), mountain ranges, island chains (but not specific islands), a group of lakes, countries that are a specific collection of states	The Nile River The Pacific Ocean The Sahara Desert The North Pole The Rocky Mountains The Hawaiian Islands The Great Lakes The United States	
A/an	The noun is singular and general	Can I borrow a pencil ? I want a vacation .	DON'T USE “a/an” ... when the noun is - Plural - Specific - Noncount
	“An” is used when the following word begins with a vowel or vowel sound.	I ate an apple . She is an honest woman when the noun represents a category of things
	The noun is new and has not been previously mentioned	A car sped past us. My sister noted that the car was red.	... when the noun has been previously mentioned

No article needed:

Sometimes, no article is needed. Here are some common reasons why this might be.

<p>➤ Singular proper nouns</p>	<p>I live on <u>University Avenue</u>.</p> <p>I am from <u>Canada</u>.</p>
<p>➤ A non-count noun that represents all of its type or a concept in general</p>	<p>I like <u>apples</u>.</p> <p><u>Seniors</u> eat for free on Saturday.</p>
<p>➤ A count noun that represents a general category (note: the count noun must be plural)</p>	<p><u>Apartments</u> are expensive in Los Angeles.</p> <p>I like spending time in <u>parks</u>.</p>
<p>➤ The name of a holiday</p>	<p>It is <u>Christmas</u>.</p> <p>Do you have plans for <u>Spring Break</u>?</p>
<p>➤ A different noun marker is already in place, such as:</p> <p>a) a possessive noun (Steve's)</p> <p>b) A possessive pronoun or adjective (my, your, his, her, its, our, their</p> <p>c) Demonstrative pronoun/adjective: this, that, these, those</p> <p>d) Quantifiers: all, any, each, either, every, few, many, some, etc.</p> <p>e) Numbers: two, five, forty-six</p>	<p>a) I bought <u>Steve's car</u>.</p> <p>b) I lost <u>my keys</u>.</p> <p>c) I like <u>those shoes</u>.</p> <p>d) I have <u>enough money</u>.</p> <p>e) I have <u>one dog</u>.</p>

Source:

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer's Reference, 8th Edition*. Bedford St. Martin, 2015.

Adapted by Jillian Surdzial, Summer, 2019