# 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>When do I use?</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>When not to use it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The</strong></td>
<td>A specific person/place/thing. Can be used for both singular and plural nouns.</td>
<td>Person: I need to speak to the manager. Place: I am going to the mall. Thing: The chairs in my living room are brown.</td>
<td>DON’T USE “the” …when the noun is not specific …when a noun is describing a general category …when the noun has not been previously mentioned or is new</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When the noun has been previously mentioned, so the reader has enough info to identify the noun specifically.</td>
<td>A car sped past us. My sister noted that the car was red.</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>The Nile River The Pacific Ocean The Sahara Desert The North Pole The Rocky Mountains The Hawaiian Islands The Great Lakes The United States</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A/an</strong></td>
<td>The noun is singular and general</td>
<td>Can I borrow a pencil? I want a vacation.</td>
<td>DON’T USE “a/an” … when the noun is - Plural - Specific - Noncount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“An” is used when the following word begins with a vowel or vowel sound.</td>
<td>I ate an apple. She is an honest woman.</td>
<td>… when the noun represents a category of things</td>
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<td>The noun is new and has not been previously mentioned</td>
<td>A car sped past us. My sister noted that the car was red.</td>
<td>… when the noun has been previously mentioned</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
No article needed:
Sometimes, no article is needed. Here are some common reasons why this might be.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Reason</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Singular proper nouns | I live on University Avenue.  
I am from Canada.  

| A non-count noun that represents all of its type or a concept in general | I like apples.  
Seniors eat for free on Saturday.  

| A count noun that represents a general category (note: the count noun must be plural) | Apartments are expensive in Los Angeles.  
I like spending time in parks.  

| The name of a holiday | It is Christmas.  
Do you have plans for Spring Break?  

| A different noun marker is already in place, such as:  
a) a possessive noun (Steve’s)  
b) A possessive pronoun or adjective (my, your, his, her, its, our, their  
c) Demonstrative pronoun/adjective: this, that, these, those  
d) Quantifiers: all, any, each, either, every, few, many, some, etc.  
e) Numbers: two, five, forty-six |  
a) I bought Steve’s car.  
b) I lost my keys.  
c) I like those shoes.  
d) I have enough money.  
e) I have one dog.  

Source:  