

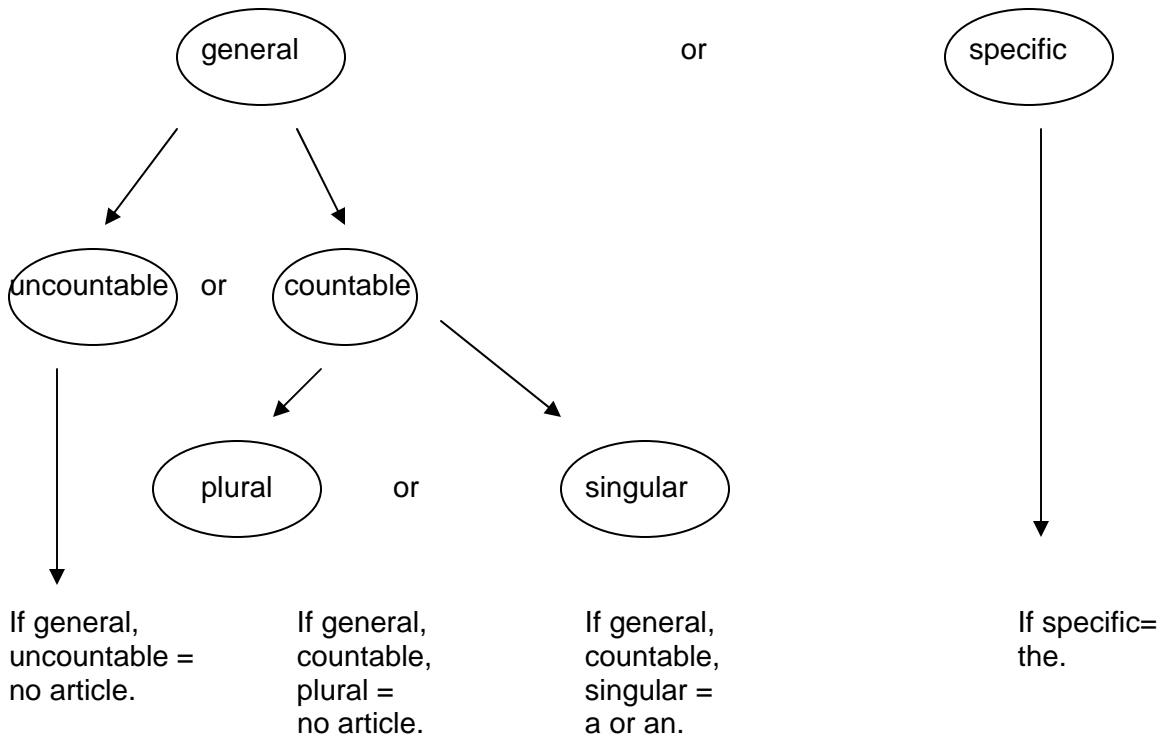
Articles

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A, an, and the are words used to describe or modify nouns. When trying to decide which article to insert, one must first decide what kind of noun is being used.

- + General nouns - name groups or categories of an object
example: *Air* is necessary for *life*.
example: My sister has an unnatural fear of *spiders*.
- + Specific nouns – name one specific thing(s)
example: The *air* in this room is stale.
example: The *spiders* we found were not poisonous.
- + Countable noun - name people, places, things that can be counted
example: Next term they hope to find an *apartment* off campus.
example: The *computers* sat on the table.
- + Uncountable nouns - name things that have no plural form, cannot be broken into units, or are abstractions
example: *Love* is a powerful emotion.
example: *Chemistry* is the hardest class I have.

Is the noun . . .



The primary function of an article is to signal to the audience whether the noun being referred to is new to the discussion or has already been mentioned in the writing. An article will also be used in cases for specific mention

A is called the **indefinite article**. We use this article when we are introducing a singular noun for the first time. Use **A** to describe something nonspecific.

If the word that follows the article begins with a vowel (a,e,i,o,u) or has a vowel sound, use **AN**.

*example: I saw **an** awesome show. **NOT** I saw awesome show.*

*example: I ate **a** peach and **an** apple. **NOT** I ate **an** peach and **a** apple.*

THE is the **definite article**. We use this article when we are naming something that has already been introduced in the writing or may already be familiar to the reader. **THE** is also used to describe something specific.

*example: I went to **a** store. **The** store was enormous.*

FIVE principal ways to determine the correct article:

- + The noun has been previously mentioned.
*I saw **a** cat in the window [first mention, indefinite]. **The** cat looked like a dog. [second mention, definite].*
- + A superlative or ranking adjective makes the noun's identity specific.
*I was **the** smallest girl in the room. [There can only be one girl who is the smallest].*
*Today was **the** greatest day of my life. [There can only be one day that was the greatest].*
- + The noun describes a unique person, place, or thing.
***The** earth revolves around **the** sun. [There is only one earth and sun— therefore use the word **the**].*
- + A modifying word, phrase, or clause follows the noun and makes it clear which specific person or thing you are referring to.
*Did you see **the** girl with **the** bright pink hair in our room? [Using **the** implies that there was only one girl with pink hair in your room]*
- + And finally...The context or situation makes the noun's identity clear.
Say to someone, "*Shut **the** door.*" You would use **the** because it was undoubtedly clear to both of you to which door you were referring.

References

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