

*A*, *an*, and *the* are articles placed before a noun and any modifiers that refer to that noun.

In general, count nouns can be quantified (counted) and require an article.

Noncount nouns, on the other hand, cannot be quantified and do not require an article.

For example:

- **The** mango fell from the tree. **A** mango rolled on the floor.  
(Mango, in both these cases, is a count noun; it needs an article.)
- Rain is common in Nova Scotia.  
(Rain, in this case, is a noncount noun; it does not take an article.)

## Definite article: *The*

*The* is a definite article used for a specific person, place, or thing (singular or plural).

Common nouns that refer to a specific person, place, or thing take the article *the*.

For example:

- **The** children were playing in **the** park. Earth revolves around **the** Sun.
- **The** dog ate **the** hamburgers that were on **the** counter.

Most proper nouns do not use articles unless they are plural, in which case they use *the*.

For example:

- **the** United States of America, **the** United Nations, **the** Smiths, **the** SMU Huskies

There are exceptions to the general rule of not using *the* with singular proper nouns.

For example:

- **the** Prime Minister of Canada, **the** Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, **the** Queen of England
- **the** Nile River, **the** Atlantic Ocean, **the** Four Seasons Hotel

## Indefinite articles: *A* and *An*

*A* and *An* are indefinite articles that are used with non-specific, singular, count nouns.

For example:

- I am reading **a** book. There is **a** fly in my soup. She had **a** cell phone in her bag.
- **An** orange fell from the tree. He had **an** iPod in his pocket. They were having **an** argument.

Note: *An* is generally used before words that begin with a vowel sound (a, e, i, o, or u).

Noncount nouns and plural nouns do not take the indefinite articles *A* or *An*.

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