

Articles

[Also known as types of Determiners]

Articles **always** precede nouns; however, nouns do not always need articles.

The

When “the” is in front of a noun, it means you are talking about one particular noun. “The” is used with the noun in order to show specificity.

- *The ferret in your shorts.*

A, An

These articles are used with nouns when it doesn’t matter what particular noun you are talking about.

- *A ferret is running somewhere else.*

Basic Types of Nouns

- Common Nouns—refer to a noun in general. These nouns need articles.
 - *elephant, leash, movie*
- Proper Nouns—identify a particular noun.
 - *Canada, Hubert, Mt. Hood, Chevrolet*
- Mass Nouns—refer to things that can’t be counted.
 - *water, clothing*
- Count Nouns—refer to something that can be counted. Only these nouns can have singular and plural forms.
 - *a ferret, two ferrets*

A noun can belong to more than one category, depending on how it is used. Pay attention to how you are using it to know whether you need an article or not.

Using Articles with Mass Nouns

These nouns are abstract ideas, and when they are used with an article, they show a specific instance of the mass noun happening.

*He told **the** truth.*
*They committed **a** crime together.*
***The** love they felt for the child was strong.*

A vs. An

The rules for using “A” vs “An” are based on the beginning **sound** of the following word. If the next word begins with a consonant sound, then use “A.” If the word begins with a vowel sound, then use “An.”

A fox, a box, a unicorn (yoo-nee-corn).

An otter, an explosive, an hour (silent “h”).

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are names and don’t need an article when they are singular, unless the proper noun represents a union of parts (e.g., **The** United States, **The** Rocky Mountains, **The** Andersons).