

USING ARTICLES CORRECTLY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

RULES	EXAMPLE	EXPLANATION
<p>1. THE is the only definite article in English.</p> <p>a. Use THE for specific things, singular or plural.</p> <p>b. Use THE with a noun that represents all of its kind.</p> <p>c. Use THE with superlative forms.</p> <p>d. Use THE with certain proper nouns. (These are tricky and it will take years to learn them all.)</p>	<p>We have (1) an oak tree in our yard. (2) It is</p>	<p>(1) one of many oak trees that exist.</p> <p>(2) pronoun</p> <p>(3) unique, as no other is as tall</p> <p>(4) specific neighborhood</p>
<p>2. A and AN are indefinite articles that mean <i>one</i>, or <i>one of many</i>.</p> <p>a. A and AN are always singular.</p> <p>b. Use A when a consonant sound immediately follows the article.</p> <p>c. Use AN when a vowel sound immediately follows the article.</p>	<p>(3) the tallest tree in (4) the neighborhood, and</p> <p>(5) acorns fall from it. (6) Squirrels take (7) the acorns and hide them everywhere—in (8) the yard and sometimes even in (9) the car. I love</p>	<p>(5) general plural noun</p> <p>(6) general plural noun</p> <p>(7) specifically acorns that fall from the oak tree</p> <p>(8) specifically our yard</p>
<p>3. Use A or AN the first time you mention an item. Use THE when you mention the same item again.</p>	<p>(10) the tree, but am often surprised to find (11) an acorn in (12) a new place. This is more (13) information than anyone will ever need about</p> <p>(14) the tree and the (15) acorns.</p>	<p>(9) specifically our car</p> <p>(10) specifically the tree we've been discussing</p> <p>(11) any one of many acorns</p> <p>(12) anyplace I haven't found an acorn before</p>
<p>4. General plural nouns, non-count nouns, and pronouns do not take articles.</p>		<p>(13) non-count noun</p> <p>(14) specifically the tree we've been discussing</p> <p>(15) specifically the acorns we've been discussing</p>

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LEARN MORE

Don't forget: students can always ask tutors or their teachers for an explanation of anything that's not clear.

Texts available to use in the SLC English Writing Lab:

<i>Focus on Grammar</i> , Marjorie Fuchs Miriam Westheimer <i>with</i> Margaret Bonner Unit 38 (pages 333-341)	<i>The Bedford Handbook</i> , Eighth Edition, Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers Pages 327-37	<i>Evergreen</i> , Ninth Edition, Susan Fawcett Appendix Pages 615-17
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Online:

[Using Articles](#)

[Article Usage](#)

[Guide to Article Usage in English](#)

[Articles, Determiners and Qualifiers](#)

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PRACTICE

In the following sentences, include the missing articles. Use Ø whenever an article isn't needed.

Definite and Indefinite Articles (Singular and Plural):

1. I want __ guitar for my birthday.
2. May I have __ apple for lunch?
3. Did you buy __ DVD I asked for?
4. How was __ movie yesterday? Did you have __ popcorn or __ nachos?
5. Is there __ union for our company? How about __ honest retirement plan?

Articles for Noun Titles and General Statements:

1. Boss MacElroy is __ tractor pull contender.
2. He's __ avid golfer, as well.
3. As __ farmer, he picks __ corn on __ daily basis.
4. He enjoys __ coffee in his free time.
5. __ (F/f)armers like Boss MacElroy are kings of __ countryside.

Comprehensive Practice:

1. There was __ balloon floating down Main Street yesterday. Did you see __ balloon?
2. I heard that __ <i>Titanic</i> was supposedly unsinkable.
3. I'd like __ cookies with my milk, please. May I have __ glass of skim milk?
4. What good is __ piano if no one wants to hear __ music?
5. When do you want __ baseball cards? I'm missing __ rare card. Here's __ tip: Don't buy __ cards with forged signatures.