

WHICH ARTICLE TO USE?

Ask yourself, "Is the noun specific?"

Specific Noun?

For specific nouns (the speaker and audience know the specific things referred to), use the definite article "the" (or in some cases, no article).
*Example: "They went to see **the movie** I recommended."*

Next, ask yourself, "Is the specific noun a proper noun or a non-proper noun?"

Non-specific Noun?

For non-specific nouns (a general thing, or type of thing, or a member of a group), use the indefinite articles "a" or "an" (or, in some cases, no article).
*Example: "I want to see **a movie**."*

Next, ask yourself, "Is the non-specific noun a count noun or non-count?"

Non-proper Noun?

Whether singular or plural, the correct article to use with a specific, non-proper noun is "the." *Example: "Don't swim in **the lake** alone."*

Proper Noun?

For proper nouns (such as a person's name or a country), no article is required. *Example: "I visited **France**."*

Non-count Noun?

For non-count nouns (things that cannot be counted, such as a liquid or a quality), an article is not required.
*Example: "The plants need **water**."*

Count Noun?

For count nouns (words that denote countable things, like "bicycle" or "phone"), ask yourself, "Is the count noun singular or plural?"

Singular Noun?

For singular count nouns, ask yourself, "Does the noun begin with a vowel?"

Plural Noun?

For plural count nouns, no article is required. *Example: "Tomorrow, we should ride **our bikes**."*

Noun starts with a consonant?

For singular count nouns that begin with a consonant, "a" is the correct article.
*Example: "Let's order **a pizza**."*

Noun starts with a vowel?

For singular count nouns that begin with a vowel, "an" is the correct article. *Example: "I ate **an apple**."*