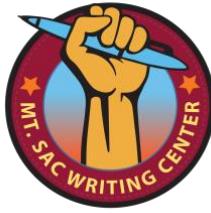


The Writing Center

Directed Learning Activity



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.

Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

DLA: Articles

Student Name:

Important Note

All the activities in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before receiving credit for completion. Students are welcome to meet with a tutor if they need help, but please be aware that students might need a second appointment for review and signature in that case. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, they will be sent a spreadsheet at the start of each semester with all Writing Center appointments, indicating whether you have completed the DLA with a tutor or not. You can also access a summary of your appointment via EAB Navigate (please see the last section of this DLA, titled “Review the DLA”).

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Understanding Articles

Articles are words used to introduce or identify a noun. You must always have an article before a singular count noun.

Correct: It's a camera.

Incorrect: ~~It's camera.~~

English has two articles: *a(n)* and *the*. *The* is used to refer to specific or particular nouns (definite); *a(n)* is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns (indefinite).

- Let's watch a movie. (any movie, not a specific movie)
- Let's watch the movie. (a specific movie I have already mentioned in our conversation)

Indefinite Articles A(n)

The articles *a* and *an* signal that the noun being modified is indefinite, referring to *any* member of a group. For example:

- I want to buy a house. (any house, not a specific house)

The indefinite articles are used to say what someone or something is:

- I am a teacher.
- Is it a camera? Is it a phone? No, it's a camera phone.

The indefinite articles are used to mention something for the first time.

- Look! There is **a** man outside. (←first mention of the man)

A vs. A(n)

Using *a* or *an* depends on the sound that the next word begins with.

- *a* → words beginning with a consonant: *a zoo*; *a good car*; *a year*
- *an* → words beginning with a vowel: *an elephant*; *an apple*; *an excellent question*
- *an* → words starting with silent "h": *an hour*, *an honest opinion*
- *a* → words starting with a pronounced "h": *a hospital*, *a heroic effort*
- *a* → words that begin with consonant "y" **sound**: *a European*, *a unique laugh*

Some as an Indefinite Article

Some may be used as an indefinite article for plural count nouns and non-count nouns.

- Joe borrowed *some* books yesterday. (plural count noun; the books he borrowed are not specified)
- I need to get *some* information for my essay topic. (non-count noun; the information is not specific)

Definite Article *The*

The definite article is used before singular and plural nouns when the noun is specific. This signals that the noun is definite, that it refers to a *particular* member of a group.

- **The** dog that bit me ran away. (a specific dog: the dog that bit me)

With plural count nouns, use *the* when you mean something specific; do not use an article when you mean something in general.

- **The** orchids at my grandmother's house are gorgeous. (these specific orchids)
- Orchids are gorgeous. (all orchids in general)

The definite article is also used for the second (or subsequent) mention of something.

- I saw **a** man and **a** woman outside. (←first mention) **The** man was wearing a hat and **the** woman was wearing a blue dress. (←second mention)

Count & Non-count Nouns

The can be used with non-count nouns (abstract things or things that are too small or unable to be counted), or the article can be omitted entirely.

- I love bread. (general)
- Please pass **the** bread. (specific—the bread that is on the table)

A(n) can be used only with singular count nouns.

- I need **a** bottle of water.

Uses of *The*

Use *the* before:

- times of day: *the morning, the afternoon, the evening* (except night)
- names of rivers, oceans and seas: *the Nile, the Pacific*
- points on the globe: *the Equator, the North Pole*
- geographical areas: *the Middle East, the West*
- deserts, mountain ranges, forests, gulfs, and peninsulas: *the Sahara, the Himalayas, the Black Forest, the Persian Gulf, the Yucatan Peninsula*
- musical instruments and scientific inventions: *the guitar, the radio, the internet*
- the superlative form: *the best class, the worst experience, the most intelligent student*
- before some adjectives with a general meaning: *the rich, the poor, the elderly*
- when there is only one of something: *the Pope, the moon, the Earth*
- some expressions with the have a general meaning: *the beach, the desert, the forest, the countryside, the mountains, the rain, the wind, and the snow*

Zero Article Ø

We do not use the indefinite articles (*a/an*) with non-count nouns, or with plural count nouns.

- What's in that cup? It's milk and sugar. (non-count nouns)
- These are kumquats. (plural count nouns)

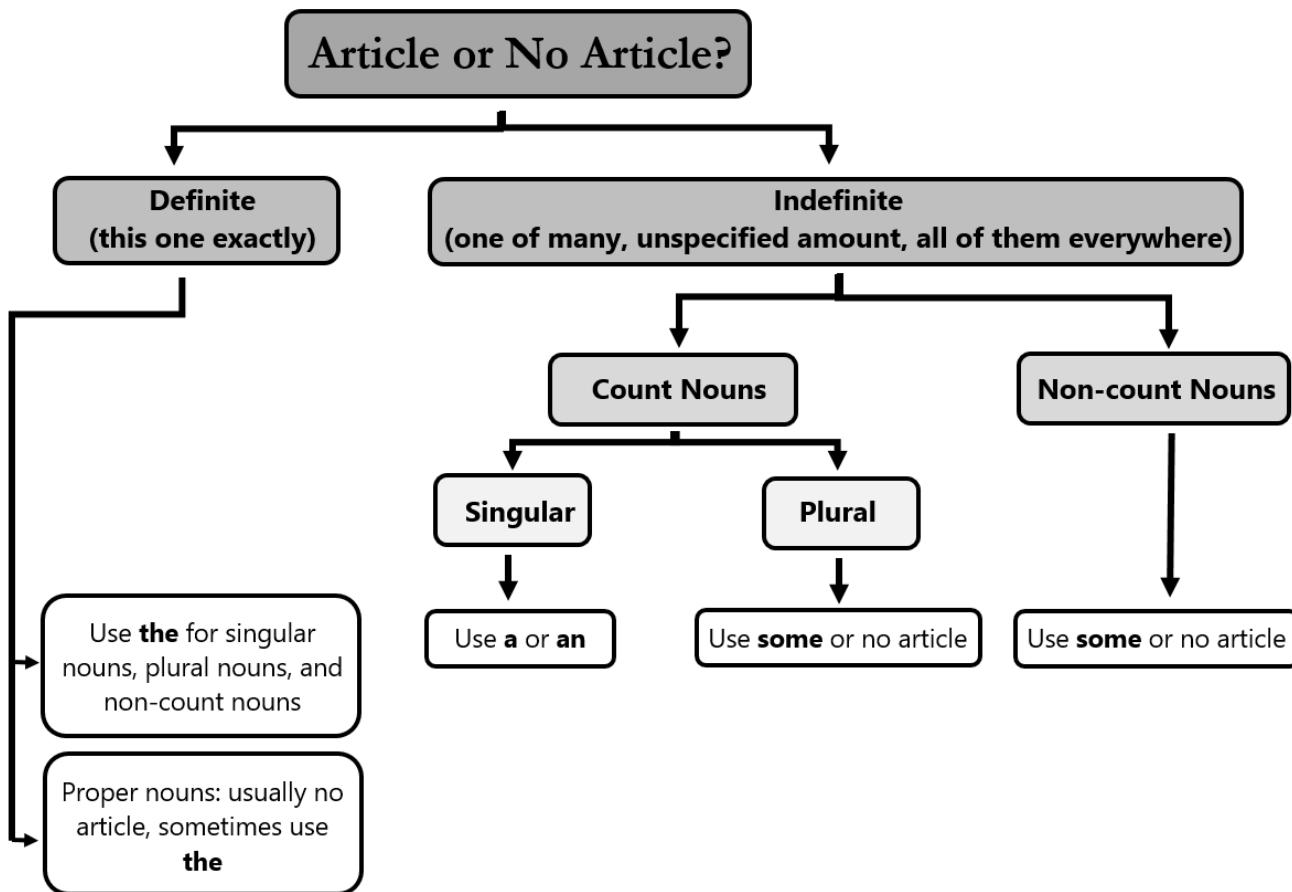
Some common types of nouns that **don't take an article** are:

- names of languages and nationalities: *Chinese, English, Spanish, French* (unless you are referring to the people of the nation: "The French love cheese.")
- meals: *breakfast, lunch, dinner*
- names of sports: *soccer, tennis, baseball*
- names of academic subjects: *mathematics, biology, history, computer science*
- months and days of the week: *March, Tuesday*
- with some nouns when we are thinking about the purpose of the place: *school, college, church, class, prison, jail, home, bed*
- names of most countries/territories: *India, Mexico, China* (except names with count nouns or plural names, *the Netherlands, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, the United States, the United Arab Emirates*)
- names of cities, towns, or states: *Walnut, Oregon, Miami* (except when the name acts as an adjective→*The Miami Airport*)
- names of streets: *Grand Ave., Tenth St.*
- names of individual lakes and bays: *Lake Superior, Lake Erie* (except with a group of lakes like *the Great Lakes*)
- names of mountains: *Mount San Antonio, Mount Everest*

- names of continents: *Asia, Europe*
- names of islands: *Easter Island, Maui, Key West* (except with island groups like *the Hawaiian Islands, the Bahamas, or the Azores*)

Article Reference Chart

Use the following chart as a quick reference for whether an article is necessary or not.



Activities (Approximately 1 Hour)

Follow the steps below and be prepared to explain your answers when you meet with a tutor. Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/articlesdla> and take the DLA quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot.

2. Identifying Articles and Correcting Errors

Review the above information on articles and then read the following sentences. Identify whether each is correct (C) or has article errors (Art.). If there are errors, correct them.

1. L.E. loves going to beach during her time off. 1.
2. Dana has a hour lunch break. 2.
3. I'm working on Tuesday and playing basketball after lunch on Saturday. 3.
4. Keys that are on table belong to Mary. 4.
5. I had dinner at Chez Yann. I really liked the sautéed mushrooms there. 5.
6. The love is most wonderful feeling. 6.
7. Michael is at the school right now. 7.
8. Robert doesn't have the bike, so he walks to school. 8.
9. I met a couple at school. I didn't like a man, but woman was nice. 9.
10. I bought the car that your sister was selling. 10.

Choose 3a or 3b Below **3a. Correct Your Own Writing**

Collect some of your graded work that identifies article errors. Correct all marked errors and look for others to correct as well. Bring this revised work with you to the DLA tutoring session.

OR

If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (3b).

3b. Adding the Missing Articles

The following paragraph is missing articles. Read it, and then add the articles *a*, *an*, *the* wherever they are needed.

Freaky Friday

On Friday, while I was sitting in my biology class, I heard loud noise in hallway. Sound was similar to dog yelping, and I got scared. All of a sudden, I saw person's face peer through window of classroom door. I jumped up in my seat and started to sweat. Face then disappeared. I looked around to see if other students had noticed, but they were busy with their classwork. I asked teacher for permission to go to restroom and stepped out of class. I looked out into hallway and there was nothing on either side. As I was walking toward restroom, I heard footsteps following behind me. I didn't dare to look back because I was too afraid. I slowed down, and then footsteps slowed down. When I sped up, footsteps did, too. I then dashed out school doors as fast as I could. I ran towards forest behind schoolyard without even looking back. Unfortunately, I tripped on old tree branch, and world turned upside down. I tumbled a few times down an embankment into dry riverbed. I quickly sprung to my feet and kept running until I was out of breath. I stopped to catch my breath when suddenly I felt eerie hand on my shoulder. My heart dropped as I turned slowly to see who was there. I jumped so violently that I woke up and found myself sitting in my chair in my biology class. Classmate was tapping my shoulder because I had fallen asleep in middle of class. Whole class was looking at me and laughing a little. I have never felt so embarrassed in my life!

4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center's website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

Revised November 2025