

4. Because (many, much) _____ classrooms are unsupervised after school hours, this (time, times) _____ becomes especially dangerous.
5. In a moment of danger, (ignorance, ignorances) _____ can be deadly, so the No Bully hot line was set up to give students (advice, advices) _____ on how to handle bullying and other threatening situations.

EXERCISE 39-2 Consulting all sections of this chapter, select the correct choice from the words in parentheses and write it in the blank.

EXAMPLE Because of their innate (intelligence, intelligences) intelligence, many (pet, pets) pets can often be very protective of the humans they love.

1. One of the most frightening (animal, animals) _____ is a poisonous (rattle-snake, rattlesnakes) _____, but not to a twelve-year-old retriever, Partner.
2. Longtime friends Nick and Ross, both eight years old, were chopping down a tree for a campfire when a (six-foot, six-feet) _____ rattlesnake fell from a branch.
3. Partner leaped over (dirt, dirt) _____ and (leave, leaves) _____ to get to the poisonous snake, which he attacked.
4. Verle, Nick's father and Partner's owner, was (many, much) _____ yards away when he heard the racket, and he rushed over just in time to see the rattler sink its fangs into Partner's nose.
5. Within minutes, the rattler was killed by a bystander; and Partner, who showed a lot of (courage, courages) _____ and has now recovered, has become one of the best (friend, friends) _____ Nick and Ross have ever had.

CHAPTER 40

Articles

40a How do I use *a*, *an*, or *the* with singular count nouns?


The words *a* and *an* are called **indefinite articles**. The word *the* is called the **definite article**. Articles are one type of DETERMINER. Articles signal that a NOUN will follow and that any MODIFIERS between the article and the noun refer to that noun.


a chair
a brown chair
a cold, metal chair

the computer
the teacher's computer
the lightning-fast computer

Every time you use a singular count noun, a COMMON NOUN that names one countable item, the noun requires some kind of determiner; see Group 1 in Box 39-2 (in 39b) for a list. To choose between *a* or *an* and *the*, you need to determine whether the noun is **specific** or **nonspecific**. A noun is considered specific when anyone who reads your writing can understand exactly and specifically to what item the noun is referring. If the noun refers to any of a number of identical items, it is nonspecific.

For nonspecific singular count nouns, use *a* (or *an*). When the singular noun is specific, use *the* or some other determiner. Box 40-1 can help you decide when a singular count noun is specific and therefore requires *the*.

 **ALERT:** Use *an* before words that begin with a vowel sound. Use *a* before words that begin with a consonant sound. Go by the sound, not the spelling. For example, words that begin with *h* or *u* can have either a vowel or a consonant sound. Make the choice based on the sound of the first word after the article, even if that word is not the noun.

an idea **a** good idea
an umbrella **a** useless umbrella
an honor **a** history book 

One common exception affects Rule 3 in Box 40-1. A noun may still require *a* (or *an*) after the first use if more information is added between the article and the noun: *I bought **a sweater** today. It was **a** (not **the**) **red sweater**.* (Your audience has been introduced to *a sweater* but not *a red*

BOX 40-1 SUMMARY


When a singular count noun is specific and requires *the*

- **Rule 1: A noun is specific and requires *the* when it names something unique or generally and unambiguously known.**
 The sun has risen above **the horizon**. [Because there is only one *sun* and only one *horizon*, these nouns are specific in the context of this sentence.]
- **Rule 2: A noun is specific and requires *the* when it names something used in a representative or abstract sense.**
 Benjamin Franklin favored **the turkey** as **the national bird** of the United States. [Because *turkey* and *national bird* are representative references rather than references to a particular turkey or bird, they are specific nouns in the context of this sentence.]
- **Rule 3: A noun is specific and requires *the* when it names something defined elsewhere in the same sentence or in an earlier sentence.**



When a singular count noun is specific and requires *the* (continued)

The ship Savannah was the first steam vessel to cross the Atlantic Ocean. [*Savannah* names a specific ship.]

The carpet in my bedroom is new. [*In my bedroom* defines exactly which carpet is meant, so *carpet* is a specific noun in this context.]

I have **a computer** in my office. **The computer** is often broken. [*Computer* is not specific in the first sentence, so it uses *a*. In the second sentence, *computer* has been made specific by the first sentence, so it uses *the*.]

- **Rule 4: A noun is specific and requires *the* when it names something that can be inferred from the context.**

Monday, I had to call **the technician** to fix my computer again. [*A technician* would be any of a number of individuals; *the technician* implies the same person has been called before, and so it is specific in this context.]

sweater, so *red sweater* is not yet specific in this context and cannot take *the*.) Other information may make the noun specific so that *the* is correct. For example, *It was **the red sweater that I saw in the store yesterday*** uses *the* because the *that* CLAUSE makes specific which red sweater is meant.

40b How do I use articles with plural nouns and with noncount nouns?

With plural nouns and NONCOUNT NOUNS, you must decide whether to use *the* or to use no article at all. (For guidelines about using DETERMINERS other than articles with nouns, see Box 39-2 in 39.) What you learned in 40a about NONSPECIFIC and SPECIFIC NOUNS can help you choose between using *the* or using no article. Box 40-1 in 40a explains when a singular count noun's meaning is specific and calls for *the*. Plural nouns and noncount nouns with specific meanings usually use *the* in the same circumstances. However, a plural noun or a noncount noun with a general or nonspecific meaning usually does not use *the*.

Geraldo grows **flowers** but not **vegetables** in his garden. He is thinking about planting **corn** sometime. [three nonspecific nouns]

Plural nouns

A plural noun's meaning may be specific because it is widely known.

The oceans are being damaged by pollution. [Because there is only one possible meaning for *oceans*—the oceans on the earth—it is correct to use *the*. This example is related to Rule 1 in Box 40-1.]

A plural noun's meaning may also be made specific by a word, PHRASE, or CLAUSE in the same sentence.

Geraldo sold **the daisies from last year's garden** to the florist. [Because the phrase *from last year's garden* makes *daisies* specific, *the* is correct. This example is related to Rule 3 in Box 40-1.]

A plural noun's meaning usually becomes specific by its use in an earlier sentence.

Geraldo planted **tulips** this year. **The tulips** will bloom in April. [*Tulips* is used in a general sense in the first sentence, without *the*. Because the first sentence makes *tulips* specific, *the tulips* is correct in the second sentence. This example is related to Rule 3 in Box 40-1.]

A plural noun's meaning may be made specific by the context.

Geraldo fertilized **the bulbs** when he planted them last October. [In the context of the sentences about tulips, *bulbs* is understood as a synonym for *tulips*, which makes it specific and calls for *the*. This example is related to Rule 4 in Box 40-1.]

Noncount nouns

Noncount nouns are always singular in form (see 39a). Like plural nouns, noncount nouns use either *the* or no article. When a noncount noun's meaning is specific, use *the* before it. If its meaning is general or nonspecific, do not use *the*.

Kalinda served us **rice**. She flavored **the rice** with curry. [*Rice* is a noncount noun. By the second sentence, *rice* has become specific, so *the* is used. This example is related to Rule 3 in Box 40-1.]

Generalizations with plural or noncount nouns

Rule 2 in Box 40-1 tells you to use *the* with singular count nouns that carry general meaning. With GENERALIZATIONS using plural or noncount nouns, omit *the*.

NO **The tulips** are **the flowers** that grow from **the bulbs**.

YES **Tulips** are **flowers** that grow from **bulbs**.

40c How do I use *the* with proper nouns and with gerunds?

Proper nouns

PROPER NOUNS name specific people, places, or things (see 7a). Most proper nouns do not require ARTICLES: *We visited **Lake Mead** with **Asha** and **Larry***. As shown in Box 40-2, however, certain types of proper nouns do require *the*.

BOX 40-2 SUMMARY

Proper nouns that use *the*

- **Nouns with the pattern *the . . . of . . .***
 - the** United States **of** America **the** Fourth **of** July
 - the** Republic **of** Mexico **the** University **of** Paris
- **Plural proper nouns**
 - the** United Arab Emirates
 - the** Johnsons
 - the** Rocky Mountains [*but* Mount Fuji]
 - the** Chicago Bulls
 - the** Falkland Islands [*but* Long Island]
 - the** Great Lakes [*but* Lake Superior]
- **Collective proper nouns (nouns that name a group)**
 - the** Modern Language Association
 - the** Society of Friends
- **Some (but not all) geographical features**
 - the** Amazon **the** Gobi Desert **the** Indian Ocean
- **Three countries**
 - the** Congo **the** Sudan **the** Netherlands

EXERCISE 40-1 Consulting all sections of this chapter, select the correct article from the words in parentheses and write it in the blank.

EXAMPLE Be forewarned: (A, An, The) The camera as we know it may soon be obsolete.

1. At (a, an, the) _____ dawn of (a, an, the) _____ twenty-first century comes (a, an, the) _____ invention so advanced that it may rid (a, an, the) _____ United States of America of every camera that has come before it.
2. (A, An, The) _____ digital camera, which allows photos to appear on (a, an, the) _____ computer monitor, takes up virtual space, not physical space.
3. As (a, an, the) _____ result, if you see (a, an, the) _____ bad photo on (a, an, the) _____ screen, you can simply erase (a, an, the) _____ poor photo to make room for (a, an, the) _____ new one.
4. With this new technology, (a, an, the) _____ aunt can even e-mail photos to her niece or nephew, or she can post photos to (a, an, the) _____ Web page.
5. Digital cameras allow people to alter (a, an, the) _____ appearance of people or things, which, according to many critics, is (a, an, the) _____ chief disadvantage of (a, an, the) _____ digital camera.