

MAKING SENSE OF ARTICLES



Articles (*the* and *a/an*) come before nouns to indicate whether they are **singular, plural, specific, or general**. In some cases, a noun requires **no article**.



Using the Definite Article *the*

The comes before **singular or plural nouns** whose **identity is clear** to the reader.

Use *the* when:

- 1 the noun is unique.
e.g., **the** Earth, **the** Internet, **the** automotive industry, **the** sky
- 2 your reader already knows which noun you are talking about because you have just mentioned it.
e.g., I witnessed an accident yesterday. **The** accident involved a bus and a car.
- 3 you have provided information to let your reader know that you are talking about one specific noun.
e.g., **The** book that I need to buy for Statistics 369 costs \$95.
- 4 the context of a situation makes it clear what noun you mean.
e.g., My cellphone broke when it fell on **the** sidewalk.
- 5 you are referring to a class as a whole (especially animals, musical instruments, and inventions).
e.g., **The** computer is a transformative invention that has changed our primary methods of communication.
- 6 you are using superlative adjectives.
e.g., Mary received **the** highest mark in the class.

Using the Indefinite Article *a/an*

A or *an* come before **singular nouns** used **generally** or **indefinitely** (they could refer to any single member of a group).

Use *a* or *an*:

- 1 before singular count nouns used in a non-specific way.
e.g., I want to go to the bookstore to buy **a** new magazine.



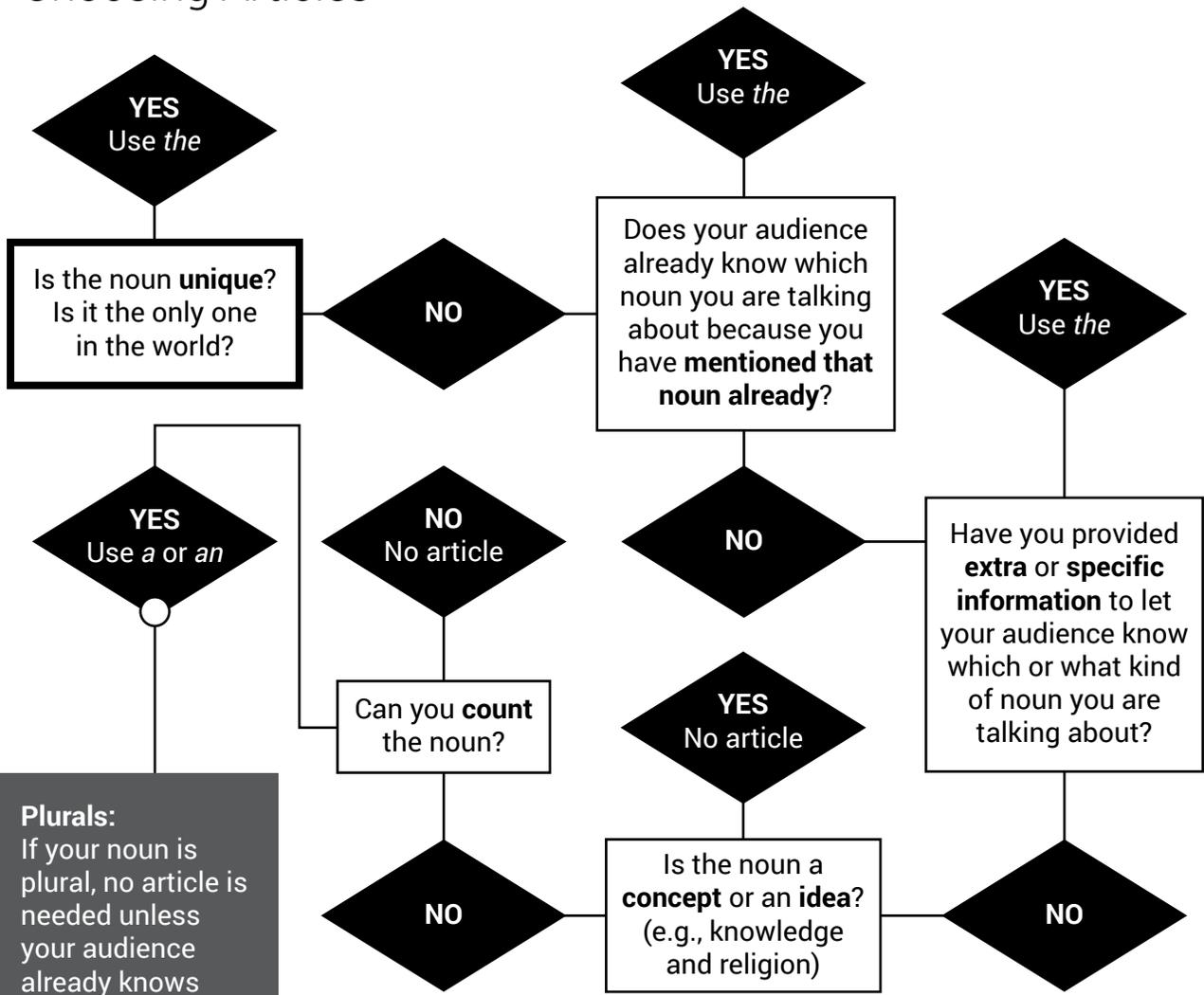
A comes before nouns that begin with **consonant** sounds.
e.g., I went to **a** concert last week.

An comes before nouns that begin with **vowel** sounds.
e.g., I was hungry during my meeting, so I ate **an** orange.

Situations that Require No Article

- 1 when you mean *all* or *in general* (especially when the noun is plural).
e.g., Politicians frequently mislead voters.
- 2 when describing a concept or idea.
e.g., Religion is a guiding principle in her life.
- 3 before non-count nouns.
e.g., The recipe called for sugar, flour, and eggs.

Choosing Articles



Plurals:
If your noun is plural, no article is needed unless your audience already knows which noun you are referring to or you have provided extra or specific information, then use *the*.



Practice: Do these nouns need an article? If so, should it be specific or general?

- 1 ___ doctor was late for my appointment.
- 2 Many ___ birds migrate in the winter.
- 3 ___ love is all you need.
- 4 I already ate ___ apple today.