

# Articles

To understand this handout, you must first know:

- An article is either one of three words: *a*, *an*, or *the*.
- An article tells the reader the difference between a specific noun and a general noun.
- An article is either definite (a particular noun) or indefinite (a general noun).

## Definite article: *the*

Use *the* with nouns whose specific identity is known to the reader:

- The noun describes a specific person or thing.

*Example:* Bob warned me that *the* psychology test would be difficult.

- The noun has been mentioned previously so the reader knows which specific person, place, or thing the writer refers to.

*Example:* A review session for anatomy class will be held on Monday. *The* review session will cover everything from the first two chapters.

*Justification:* *A* is used before the noun “review session” in the first sentence because the reader doesn't know which specific review session the person is referring to. *The* is used in the second sentence because now the reader knows which session is being discussed.

- The noun's identity is clear due to a specific context or situation.

*Example:* During an eclipse, you should not look directly at *the* sun.

*Justification:* Because there is only one sun in our solar system, the one we are discussing is clear to the reader, so the writer can use *the*.

## Indefinite articles: *a*, *an*

Use *a* or *an* with singular nouns only if they can be counted (like one girl, four bananas, two children), and their specific identity is not known to the reader.

*Example:* A new technique in marketing is being discussed.

Use *a* before a consonant sound.

*Example:* *a* zero, *a* banana, *a* frog, *a* pocket

Use *an* before a vowel sound and words beginning with an H.

*Example:* *an* apple, *an* echo, *an* image, *an* oven, *an* honor