

## USING ARTICLES: *THE*

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Articles are important for clarifying the noun(s) that follows. They most often appear before nouns, but may be used before modifiers such as adjectives.

When deciding which article to use there are several things to consider, such as whether a noun is common or proper, count or non-count, singular or plural, and specific or general.

Each number below defines the situation in which students will use the article **the**. The letter *a* under each number gives an example. Students should come up with their own sentence for letter *b*.

Use **the** when

1. The noun has been previously mentioned.
  - a. A cow was grazing in a field. **The** cow was brown with specks of white.
  - b.
2. A phrase or clause following the noun restricts its identity.
  - a. Hand me **the** dishes that are on the table.
  - b.
3. Superlatives such as *tallest* or *worst* make a noun specific.
  - a. Fairyflies, or *Dicopomorpha echmepterygis*, are **the** *smallest* insects in the world.
  - b.

4. The noun describes a unique person, place, or thing.
  - a. During an eclipse, one should not look directly at **the** sun.
  - b.
  
5. The context or situation makes the noun's identity clear.
  - a. Please don't slam **the** door when you leave.
  - b.
  
6. The noun is singular and refers to a certain class or category.
  - a. **The** Falcon is an old Ford car model.
  - b.

*Note:* Descriptive adjectives do not necessarily make a noun specific. EXAMPLE: If I could be anything, I would be **a** big, green, fire-breathing dragon.