

Using Articles Correctly

When making broad generalizations:

<p>Use a with singular count nouns.</p>	<p>A true friend is always there for you in times of need.</p> <p>A flashlight comes in handy when the electricity goes out.</p>
<p>Use no article with plural count nouns.</p>	<p>True friends are always there for you in times of need.</p> <p>Flashlights come in handy when the electricity goes out.</p>
<p>Use no article with noncount nouns.</p>	<p>Supposedly, tea has less caffeine than coffee.</p> <p>Candy is bad for your teeth.</p>

When talking about something without getting specific:

<p>Use a with singular count nouns.</p>	<p>A friend came to visit me yesterday. There is a flashlight in the kitchen drawer. Tina ate an apple.</p>
<p>Use no article OR some with plural count nouns.</p> <p>Other expressions of quantity you can use with plural count nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • several • many • a few • a lot of • two, three, four, etc. 	<p>Some friends are coming for dinner tonight.</p> <p>We ate apples while on our hike.</p> <p>We keep a few flashlights in case of emergency.</p>
<p>Use no article OR some with noncount nouns.</p> <p>Other expressions of quantity you can use with noncount nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lot of • much • a little 	<p>I drank some tea to keep myself warm.</p> <p>I drink tea every morning.</p> <p>I drink a lot of coffee when I need to stay awake.</p>

When talking about very specific things:

Note: In order for your statement to fall in this category, the person you are talking to has to be thinking of the same thing you are. This may be because:

- a) it is shared (previous) knowledge OR
- b) you have *just* referred to the thing OR
- c) your sentence makes it very clear which thing you mean.

Use the with singular count nouns.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Where is the remote control?b) I had a pen and a pencil, but I lost the pencil.c) I need to find the paper that I wrote his phone number on.
Use the with plural count nouns.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) I will pay the bills tomorrow.b) I had both pens and pencils, but I lost all the pencils.c) I need to find the notes I took in class last night.
Use the with noncount nouns.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a) Did you take out the trash yet?b) I drank both hot chocolate and tea this morning, but the hot chocolate was more satisfying.c) The candy I bought is too sweet.

Some other uses of articles:

- Use **a** after the verb “to be” to indicate membership in a group: *I am a student.*; *I am an American.*
- DO NOT use articles before names of languages and nationalities: *I am Chinese.*
- Use **the** before some geographical nouns:
 - names of rivers, oceans, seas (*the Atlantic*; *the Amazon*)
 - points on the globe (*the Equator*; *the South Pole*)
 - geographical regions (*the Midwest*; *the South*)
 - names of deserts, forests, peninsulas, etc. (*the Sahara*, *the Iberian peninsula*)
- DO NOT use **the** before other geographical nouns:
 - names of *most* countries, cities, towns, states (with exceptions such as *the United States*, *the Philippines*, etc.)
 - names of streets
 - names of lakes, bays, mountains (except groups of lakes or mountain ranges)
 - names of continents, islands (except island chains)