

USING ARTICLES IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR: INDEFINITE (A, AN) AND DEFINITE (THE)

IS YOUR NOUN...

countable or non-countable?	countable Items that can be counted: e.g., 2 microscopes, 5 humans, 2 ideas, 3 hours				noncountable Items that <u>cannot</u> be counted: e.g., research, literature, equipment, information		
	singular e.g., microscope, human, idea, hour		plural e.g., microscopes, humans, ideas, hours		singular e.g., research, literature, equipment, information		
singular or plural?	general		specific	general	specific	general	specific
general* or specific**?	general		specific	general	specific	general	specific
Then your article should be...	A (Indefinite article) for nouns that start with a consonant or a consonant sound:	AN (Indefinite article) for nouns that start with a vowel or a vowel sound:	THE (Definite article)	no article	THE (Definite article)	no article	THE (Definite article)
	e.g., a microscope, a human	e.g., an idea, an hour	e.g., the microscope, the human, the idea, the hour	e.g., microscopes, humans, ideas, hours	e.g., the microscopes, the humans, the ideas, the hours	e.g., research, literature, equipment, information	e.g., the research, the literature, the equipment, the information

*Your noun is **general** if the reader hasn't been introduced to the noun yet. (e.g., *He bought **a** microscope at the store. / He conducted **research** on water management systems.*)

Your noun is **specific if the reader already knows about the noun, either because (a) you referred to it before (*He bought a microscope at the store; he then gave **the** microscope to his lab partner.*); (b) it has a specific description (*He bought the **Meiji** microscope that she recommended. / He conducted **the** research for which he had been given funding.*); or (c) there is only one (***The** sun rises at 6:00a.m.*)