

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

## IS YOUR NOUN...

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