



Writing Centre

Articles

Definition: The articles, **a/an** and **the**, are types of adjectives. Their job is to modify nouns.

The article **the** is sometimes called the definite article, and it tells us that a noun is specific.

Example: **The** book I am reading is old. (not any book, only the book I am reading)

The articles **a/an** are sometimes called indefinite articles, and they tell us if the noun is general or one of a possible group.

Example: It is unusual to see **a** young girl in **a** dress. (any girl, or any dress)

Rules for Usage:

an: Use before singular count nouns beginning with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) or vowel sound.

Example: *an agent, an egg, an issue, an opal*

a: Use before singular count nouns beginning with consonants.

Example: *a creek, a book, a basketball, a class*

the:

Use before singular and plural, count and non-count nouns.

Example: *the hat, the shoes, the dancers, the air, the idea*

Use to modify a noun that is definite or has been previously mentioned in the context.

Example: *She appreciated **the** gift you gave her.*

Use to indicate a noun that is unique.

Example: **The** Columbia River is near here.

Use to designate a natural phenomenon.

Example: **The** rain is falling so hard.

Use to refer to a time period.

Example: *This song was very popular in **the** 1980s.*

Flowchart Approach for Choosing Articles

