

Though the articles "a," "an," and "the" are particularly troublesome, there are some basic rules which can help you use them correctly in many situations.

Rule: Normally, an article is not used with possessive nouns, demonstrative pronouns, numbers, possessive pronouns, quantifiers, and specifiers.

Incorrect: *I saw **the this** student at the bookstore yesterday.*

Revised: *I saw **the** student at the bookstore yesterday.*

Rule: In cases of "a few," "the most," and "all the," an article can be used with another noun marker.

Example: ***A few** students turned in their research papers early.*

Example: ***The most** important goal she has set is to complete her Master's Degree in Educational Administration.*

Example: ***All the** books left in the classroom are historical in nature.*

Rule: Use "a" (an) with a singular count noun whose specific identity is not known to the reader.

Incorrect: *Mary arrived in **the** car.*

Revised: *Mary arrived in **a** car.*

Rule: Do not use "a" (an) with non count nouns.

Incorrect: *I will go buy **a** milk.*

Revised: *I will go buy **some** milk.*

Rule: Use "the" with most nouns whose specific identity is known to the reader.

Incorrect: *All of the boxes were loaded into a truck. **A** truck was driven to the supermarket.*

Revised: *All of the boxes were loaded into a truck. **The** truck was driven to the supermarket.*

Rule: Do not use "the" with plural or noncount nouns meaning "all" or "in general;" do not use "the" with most singular proper nouns.

Incorrect: *In many parts of the world, **the** rice is a main staple in most people's diet.*

Revised: *In many parts of the world, **rice** is a main staple in most people's diet.*

Incorrect: *During part of my vacation, I went to **the** Japan.*

Revised: *During part of my vacation, I went to **Japan**.*