

Note. If **a/an** has been used with a noun when it is first mentioned, the article changes to **the** when the same noun is mentioned later.

- **The local newspaper printed an article about pet health yesterday. The article discussed how to protect dogs from ticks.**

No Article

Certain nouns require neither an indefinite nor definite article before them. Here are a few of the most common guidelines:

- When making generalizations with plural nouns, no article is used.
 - **Peaches grow on trees.** (This is a general statement about peaches, which is a plural count noun.)
- No article is needed before abstract nouns.
 - **Education is important.** (The speaker is talking about the abstract concept of education which is something that can only be thought of and not physically sensed.)
- Most proper nouns do not need an article.
 - **Brazil is the largest country in South America.** (Country and continent names are proper nouns that do not need an article before them.)
 - **She can speak Spanish and French.** (Language names are also proper nouns that do not need an article.)

Exceptions. Although most proper nouns do not need an article, there are several exceptions to this rule. Some examples of the most common types of exceptions are given below:

- **Dutch is the official language of the Netherlands.** (Use a definite article before the name of a country or geographical location if the name suggests that it contains separate regions or areas.)
- **The climate is warmer in the South.** (Use a definite article before the name of a specific region or area.)

- **The Pacific Ocean is the largest ocean in the world.** (A definite article is needed before the names of oceans, as well as deserts and rivers.)
- **The University of Pennsylvania is a strong research institution.** (A definite article is used before college and university names when “university” or “college” is the first word in the name.)
- **The Natural History Museum is located in Washington, D.C.** (Use a definite article before the names of museums and libraries.)

Flowchart

The flowchart below, featured in the worksheet [Articles!](#) by the Connors Writing Center at the University of New Hampshire, shows the basic process of choosing an article:

