

Rob Whyte's Writing Class

Articles and Nouns

1. A/An with a single, general countable noun. It's not specific, we don't know which one.
 - John went to the airport in a taxi.
 - The taxi was black and yellow.

In the first sentence we use A. Why? The taxi is not specific. It's any taxi. BUT in the second sentence, we're talking about one specific taxi. Which taxi? The taxi John was talking to the airport. That's why we use **The** in the second sentence.

Here's is another example.

- Hyun-chul wrote an email to his professor.
- The email said that Hyun-chul was going to be late for class tomorrow.

2. Don't use a/the with single non-count nouns. These are general things.

- Gasoline is expensive.
- Water is important.
- Rice is delicious.

BUT. Look at these sentences. These sentences talk about specific things. So we should use THE.

- The gasoline at ESSO Oilbank is expensive.
- The water in Jinju is clean.
- The rice in this restaurant is delicious.

3. Use **A** with counters plus non-count nouns. In these sentences, use the same rules as #1.

- I have a bottle of vinegar in my bag.
- The bottle of vinegar costs 1,500 won at HomePlus.

4. Use **THE** when the reader knows the noun you are talking about.

- You should not look directly at **the** sun. (there is only one sun)
- Please close **the** door when you come in the class. (you come in only one door).

5. Don't use **THE** with plural nouns that mean ALL or IN GENERAL

- The LED signs are everywhere in Seomyeon. (X)
- LED signs are everywhere in Seomyeon.

If we make a small change, we need **THE**. Why do we use THE here?

- The LED signs in Seomyeon are bright at night.

6. Usually, don't use **THE** with proper names.

- I live in the Sajik-dong. (X)
- I talked with the Professor Whyte. (X)
- The Seoul is the capital city of the Korea. (X)

SUMMARY

Rules	Example
First time you talk about a general noun: use A/An with a single, general countable noun. Use THE second time.	I saw a dog. The dog was black.
Don't use A/THE with single, general non-count noun.	Espresso coffee is delicious.
Use THE with specific non count nouns.	The espresso coffee in France is delicious.
Use A or THE with counters plus non-count nouns	I see a bottle of wine on the table. The bottle of wine comes from France.
Use THE when the reader knows which noun you are talking about.	Open the window, please.
Don't use THE with plural nouns that mean ALL or IN GENERAL.	Oranges are my favorite breakfast food.
Don't use THE with proper names.	Homeplus is a large department store.

Practice 1 A, And or The?

- 1 There is _____ rainbow in _____ sky.
- 2 Who is _____ woman in _____ hall?
- 3 _____ doctor gave Barry _____ IV.
- 4 Jennifer opened _____ door to let _____ dog in.
- 5 Kevin is _____ only child in _____ family.
- 6 What's _____ largest mammal in _____ world?
- 7 There's _____ bird in _____ tree.
- 8 Doug is writing _____ letter to his niece.
- 9 June has _____ brother and _____ sister.
- 10 They reached _____ top of _____ mountain in 2 hours.
- 11 _____ cherries are sweet.
- 12 _____ cherries from Argentina don't taste good.

Practice 2 Add articles if required.

Gary lives in _____ (1) house with his mom, dad and brother, Jack. _____ (2) house has two bedrooms, _____ (3) kitchen, two bathrooms and _____ (4) big backyard. John's father works for _____ (5) software company. His mom runs _____ (6) small business at home. She spends her day talking on _____ (7) telephone, calling clients and writing _____ (8) reports. His brother is _____ (9) high school student but he helps with _____ (10) housework. He likes using _____ (11) vacuum cleaner and washing _____ (12) dishes. He gets _____ (13) allowance for helping with _____ (14) chores.

Answers

Practice 1 A, And or The?

- 1 There is a rainbow in the sky.
- 2 Who is the woman in the hall?
- 3 The doctor gave Barry an IV.
- 4 Jennifer opened the door to let the dog in.
- 5 Kevin is the only child in the family.
- 6 What's the largest mammal in the world?
- 7 There's a bird in the tree.
- 8 Doug is writing a letter to his niece.
- 9 June has a brother and a sister.
- 10 They reached the top of the mountain in 2 hours.
- 11 Cherries are sweet.
- 12 The cherries from Argentina don't taste good.

Practice 2 Add articles if required.

Gary lives in a (1) house with his mom, dad and brother, Jack.
The (2) house has two bedrooms, a (3) kitchen, two bathrooms and a (4) big backyard. John's father works for a (5) software company. His mom runs a (6) small business at home. She spends her day talking on the (7) telephone, calling clients and writing (8) reports. His brother is a (9) high school student but he helps with the (10) housework. He likes using the (11) vacuum cleaner and washing the (12) dishes. He gets an (13) allowance for helping with the (14) chores.