

### Grammar Explanation

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#### When to use *a/an* or *the*

- Use *a*, *an*, or *the* before singular count nouns (nouns that you can make plural).
- Use *a* or *an* when the reader does not know which particular person or thing you are referring to, or when you are referring to one of many possible people or things.
  - Example: *He had **a good English teacher**.*  
(We don't know which particular English teacher the writer is referring to.)
  - Example: *Writing a journal is **a good way** to improve writing skills.*  
(Writing a journal is one of many ways to improve writing skills.)
- Use *the* when the reader knows which particular person or thing you are referring to.
  - Example: ***The situation that homeless families in New York are facing** is serious.*  
(The words *that homeless families in New York are facing* tell the reader which particular situation is being referred to.)
  - Example: *The article provides a good **explanation** about the causes of the war. **The explanation** focuses on economic factors.*  
(The reader knows that the particular explanation the writer is referring to is the explanation mentioned in the previous sentence.)
- Also use *the* when there is only one possible person or thing that you could be referring to.
  - Example: *Good judgment is **the most important quality** for a presidential candidate to have.*  
(Only one quality can be the most important.)

Excerpted from: Nouns and Articles: Exercise 5