

Grammar Explanation

When to use *the* or no article with plural or non-count nouns

- With plural or non-count nouns, you can either use *the* or not use any article. It depends on what you are describing. You never use *a* or *an*.
- Use *the* with plural and non-count nouns when referring to particular things, people, or activities.
 - Example: *Lack of education is one of **the main causes** of poverty.*
(The writer is referring to a particular group of causes of poverty – *the main causes*.)
- Use *the* with plural and non-count nouns when the reader already knows what you are referring to.
 - Example: *In **the research that I discussed earlier** in this paper, **the authors** argue that there are many factors that lead to obesity.*
- Do not use *the* if you are referring to a group of people or things in general.
 - Incorrect: ***The scientists** believe that increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are responsible for global warming.*
 - Corrected: ***Scientists** believe that increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are responsible for global warming.*
- Do not use *the* if you are referring to a thing, activity, or idea in general.
 - Incorrect: ***The education** is important for getting a good job.*
 - Corrected: ***Education** is important for getting a good job.*
- Do not use *the* with most countries, states, cities, streets, and names of languages. Some exceptions are countries with a countable noun in their name.
 - Example: *Students in **South Korea, Finland, and the Czech Republic** scored higher in math tests than eighth graders in **the United States**.* (*Republic* and *States* are countable nouns.)
 - Example: *More than half of the residents of **New York City** speak a language other than **English** at home.*

Excerpted from: Nouns and Articles: Exercise 6