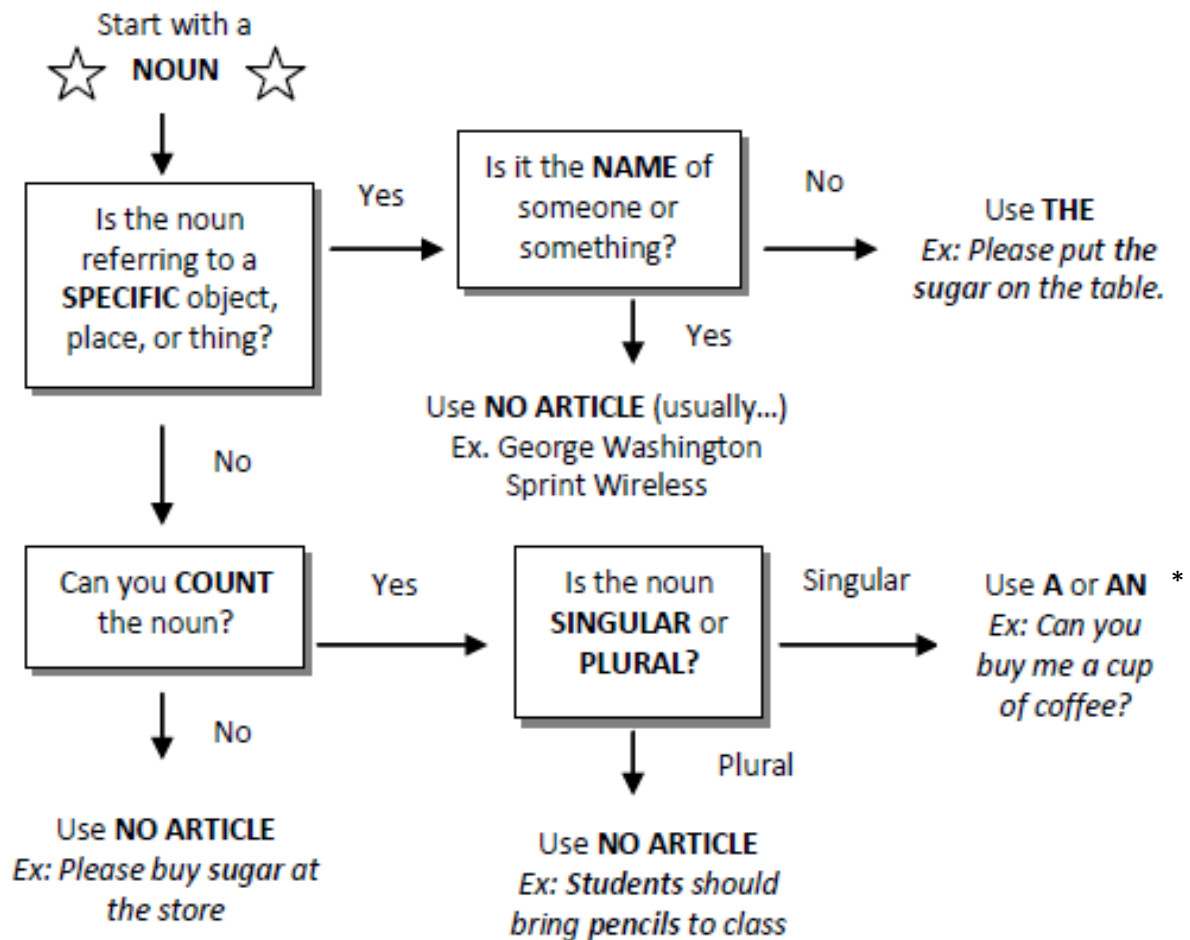


Articles

Unfortunately, there are *a lot* of exceptions with articles in the English language. Because of this, the diagram below can only be expected to work about 80% of the time. However, it does highlight three important ideas to consider when determining which article to use:

- Definite vs. indefinite nouns (i.e., *Is the noun referring to a **specific** object, place, or thing?*)
- Countability
- Singular vs. plural nouns



*Note: "A" is used when the noun starts with a consonant sound (e.g., **a** car). "An" is used when the noun starts with a vowel sound (e.g., **an** elephant).

This handout was taken and adapted from <http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/handouts/citation/Articles.pdf>.

Example #1:

Can you buy me ___ cup of coffee at Starbucks?

Q. Are you referring to a specific cup of coffee?

A. No. Any cup of coffee at Starbucks will work.

Q. Can you count the noun?

A. One cup, two cups. Yes, I can!

Q. Is the noun singular or plural?

A. Singular, please! Otherwise, I will never sleep!

Can you buy me a cup of coffee at Starbucks?

(Because the noun “cup” starts with a consonant sound—“c”—use “a” instead of “an.”)

Example #2:

Will you take ___ dog for a walk?

Q. Are you referring to a specific dog?

A. Yes, I am referring to my dog specifically.

Q. Is the noun the name of someone or something?

A. No, the noun “dog” is not a name.

Will you take the dog for a walk?

Example #3:

Will you take ___ for a walk?

Q. Are you referring to a specific dog?

A. Yes, I am referring to my dog specifically.

Q. Is the noun the name of someone or something?

A. Yes, the noun is my dog’s name.

Will you take Rover for a walk?

(This example illustrates a situation for which an article is not needed.)