THE WRITING CENTER

Articles Flowchart

Does the noun refer to a **specific** or **definite** person, place, thing or idea?

Yes →

Is the noun a proper name?

Yes →

No article. *Grandma Ruth, Santa Claus, Denmark, etc.*

No →

Use **the**. *Give **the cookies** to Sam. I watched **the game** last night.* (In both examples, the speaker is referring to specific nouns—particular cookies, or a particular game.)

No →

Can you **count** the noun?

Yes →

Is the noun **singular** or **plural**?

Plural →

No article. *I had so many **cookies** last night. He is very afraid of **bears**.*

Singular →

Use **a** or **an**. *I found **a quarter** in my pocket. Will you hand me **an apple**?* (The speaker is not referring to a specific quarter or apple.)

No →

No article. *There's **glue** all over my desk. We doused the fire with **water**.* (Neither "glue" nor "water" is a noun that you can count.)