

Writing Center

Article Guidelines

@ = no article used

I. SPECIFIC REFERENCES

A. Indefinite

EXAMPLES:

a tiger (singular count noun)

@ tigers (plural count noun)

@ ink (mass noun, non-count noun)

We usually use the words some or any before mass nouns or plural count nouns.

EXAMPLES:

I saw a tiger yesterday at the zoo.

Do you have a pen?

Do you have any pens? Do you have any ink?

May I borrow some coffee?

Did you lose some books?

- B. Definite: A noun is usually definite when it is followed by an of phrase, from phrase, in phrase, or relative clause (that, which, who).

EXAMPLES:

The tiger (singular count noun)

The tiger [that I saw]

The tiger [in the cage]

The pens (plural count noun)

The ink [in the bottle] (mass noun)

II. GENERAL REFERENCE - - this rule does not apply to singular count nouns

A. Use @ with plural, abstract, and mass nouns

<u>Plural</u>	<u>Abstract</u>	<u>Mass</u>
games	history	wine
walks	music	cheese
cameras	electricity	ink
boys	honesty	air
clothes	love	coffee

B. Use the if the plural, abstract, or mass noun is followed by a word that specifically identifies it.

EXAMPLES:

the games [that children play]

the cameras [from Japan]

the history [of France]

the wine [that I bought]

the electricity [which I used]

III. Use a/an or some/any when a word is used in conversation for the first time. The use the.

EXAMPLES:

He bought a car. He also bought some cheese and some games for the children. He didn't buy any coffee because the coffee was too expensive. On his way home, the car broke down, so he ate the cheese and played with the games.

IV. Use the with nouns which the reader or listener is familiar with.

EXAMPLES:

I read the newspaper, and watched the news. Later I went to the beach. Tomorrow I'll go get the mail. Then I'll go to the bank.

V. In a sentence with the pattern S-LV-NC, use a/an with singular count noun; use @ [no article] with plurals or mass Nouns.

EXAMPLES:

John is a lawyer.

Jim is a doctor.

They are teachers.

Parmesan is cheese.

VI. With proper nouns, use the or @ [no article]

A. Use the for

1. Plural place names (the Alps, the Netherlands)
2. Place names of rivers (the Mississippi, the Thames, the Danube)
3. names of oceans, seas, and canals (the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Panama Canal)
4. names of hotels and restaurants (the Omni, the Sheraton, the Lighthouse, the Three Ships Inn)
5. names of theaters and museums (the Riverview, the Naro, the Chrysler Museum, the National Gallery)
6. names of newspapers (the Virginian-Pilot, the Beacon)

B. Use @ [no article] for

1. personal names (Mary, George, Mr. Jones)
2. holidays and times (Christmas, Mother's Day, February, Friday)
3. place names of
 - a. continents (Australia, South America)
 - b. countries (Canada, Korea, France)
 - c. states (Iowa, Virginia)
 - d. cities (Norfolk, Virginia Beach)
 - e. lakes (Erie, Huron)

NOTE: There are exceptions to all of these guidelines about articles; however, mastery of these general rules should help you make decisions about using articles in your sentences.