THE ARTICLES a, an, AND the
The indefinite articles a and an and the definite article the signal that a noun is about to appear. The noun may follow the article immediately, or modifiers may intervene.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>article</th>
<th>noun</th>
<th>article</th>
<th>noun</th>
<th>article</th>
<th>noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a sunset</td>
<td>an incredible sunset</td>
<td>the round table</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

USE a (or an) WITH SINGULAR COUNT NOUNS.
a is used before a consonant sound: a banana, a tree, a picture, a hand, a kid.
an is used before a vowel sound: an eggplant, an hour, an uncle, an occasion.

DO NOT USE a (or an) WITH NONCOUNT NOUNS.
A noncount noun refers to an entity or an abstract concept that cannot be counted: sugar, gold, honesty, jewelry. If you want to express an approximate amount, you can use a qualifier, such as the following: a little salt, any homework, enough bread, less violence, more coffee, some news.

USE the WITH MOST NOUNS WHOSE SPECIFIC IDENTITY IS KNOWN TO THE READER.
Incorrect: When truck skidded a few seconds later, we almost ran into it.
Correct: When the truck skidded a few seconds later, we almost ran into it.

Incorrect: Our petite daughter dated tallest boy in the class.
Correct: Our petite daughter dated the tallest boy in the class.

DO NOT USE the WITH PLURAL OR NONCOUNT NOUNS MEANING “ALL” OR “IN GENERAL”; DO NOT USE the WITH MOST SINGULAR PROPER NOUNS.
Incorrect: The fountains are an expensive element of landscape design.
Correct: Fountains are an expensive element of landscape design.

Incorrect: In some parts of the world, the rice is preferred to all other grains.
Correct: In some parts of the world, rice is preferred to all other grains.