Using Articles Correctly

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 might follow the article immediately, or modifiers might 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></td>
<td>a sunset</td>
<td></td>
<td>an exciting vacation</td>
<td></td>
<td>the round table</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.