In English, there are 3 options for articles: **the**, **a/an**, and **no article**. How do you know which one to use? You can start by asking yourself these questions:

1. **Is it a common noun?**
   - **NO**
   - **YES**

2. **Is it countable?**
   - **NO**
   - **YES**

3. **Is it singular?**
   - **YES**
   - **NO**

4. **Is it definite?**
   - **NO**
   - **YES**

   - **a(n)**
   - **the**
   - **no article**

   - **Is it definite (specific)?**
     - **YES**
     - **NO**

     - **the**
     - **no article**

Proper nouns usually take no articles (Exceptions: Plural nouns, and proper nouns containing common nouns, e.g., The United States, the Department of Education)
Of course, there are always exceptions. These might include:

- **Specific use of a/an:** to introduce a new or previously unknown specific entity.
- **Meals and some places are seen as “institutions” and never require an article** (e.g., dinner, brunch, church, school, home, etc).
- **Generic reference:** all three articles (a/an, the, and no article) can be used to refer to a whole class of common nouns.
  - **a/an** with singular countable nouns (A man is only as good as his word.)
  - **no article** with plural or uncountable nouns (Honesty is the best policy. / He likes driving racecars.)
  - **the** with singular countable nouns (The doctor is a respected figure in society.)