

Special Topic I

Articles

Example 1

- (a) The apple in my hand is red.
- (b) An apple in my hand is red.
- (c) Apple in my hand is red.

(a) The apple in my hand is red.

(Interpretation: (i) There is one apple in my hand.

(ii) There is crushed apple in my hand and all of it is red.)

(b) An apple in my hand is red.

(Interpretation: There is more than one apple in my hand, but only one is red.)

(c) Apple in my hand is red.

(Interpretation: There is crushed apple in my hand and some of it is red.)

Example 2

- (a) My friend gave me book about Picasso.
- (b) My friend gave me a book about Picasso.
- (c) My friend gave me the book about Picasso.

(a) My friend gave me book about Picasso.

(Impossible)

(b) My friend gave me a book about Picasso.

(Interpretation: There are a number of books about Picasso, and my brother gave me one of them.)

(c) My friend gave me the book about Picasso.

(Interpretation: Within the context of the present conversation, there is just one book about Picasso.)

Example 3

- (a) Water entered my tent.
- (b) The water entered my tent.
- (c) A water entered my tent.

(a) Water entered my tent.

(Interpretation: Some water entered the tent.)

(a) The water entered my tent.

(Interpretation: Within the present conversation,
there is some particular water, and all of it
entered the tent.)

(a) A water entered my tent.

(Impossible)

Example 4

- (a) Water in my glass is cold.
- (b) A water in my glass is cold.
- (c) The water in my glass is cold.

(a) Water in my glass is cold.

(Interpretation: Some of the water in the glass is cold.)

(b) A water in my glass is cold.

(Impossible)

(c) The water in my glass is cold.

(Interpretation: All of the water in the glass is cold.)

What are the rules that determine
article use?

Rules for Article Use

1. Countable or uncountable?
2. Specified or unspecified?

The Basic Rules

	Specified	Unspecified
Countable	The	A (or plural)
Uncountable	X	(nothing)

Countable vs. Uncountable

Rule: A noun is countable if and only if that to which it refers possesses a boundary.

What does that mean?

We regard something as having a boundary if we can see, define or in any way imagine the limit of its extent.

Equivalent Condition

A thing possesses a boundary if and only if it possesses a well-defined (concrete or abstract) form (e.g. an apple, a theory). Something that possesses the potential to take many forms itself is formless and hence possesses no boundary (e.g. water, behavior).

Examples of Countable Nouns

1. An apple

2. The wine in a bottle

(Here, we regard a noun as including modifiers.)

3. Rocks

Examples of Uncountable Nouns

1. Applesauce
2. Wine
3. Sand

Specified vs. Unspecified

A noun is specified if that to which it refers is unique.

What does that mean?

We regard a noun as specified if at the point in which it appears, **the reader** has sufficient information to uniquely identify it.

Types of information

1. Background information (depends on reader).
2. Information presented to the point at which the noun appears in the present communication.
3. Information contained in modifying expressions.

Let us reconsider the examples

- (a) The apple in my hand is red.
- (b) An apple in my hand is red.
- (c) Apple in my hand is red.

- (a) My friend gave me book about Picasso.
- (b) My friend gave me a book about Picasso.
- (c) My friend gave me the book about Picasso.

A few more difficult examples

1. We ignore *** details of *** frictional interaction.
2. This result provides us with *** understanding of *** more complicated case.
3. Thus, *** behavior derived above is described by *** following equation: $A = B$.
4. *** quantum mechanics continues to provide interesting philosophical puzzles.