



DOUGLAS COLLEGE

Learning Centre

ARTICLES WITH PROPER NOUNS

The distinction between common and proper nouns is important when you edit for articles because, in most cases, proper nouns do not need articles.

Common nouns are nouns that are not formal names, such as *girl, ideology, school, city, and superhero*. We do not capitalize the first letter of common nouns. Many common nouns need articles.

Proper nouns are names of people, places, things, and ideas, such as *Mary, Confucianism, Douglas College, Vancouver, and Superman*. The first letter in these names is always capitalized, so proper nouns are easy to identify.

In the following example, you can see that city names, street names and people's names do not usually require articles.

Jennifer agreed to meet Mary at Stanley Park in Vancouver.

However, sometimes proper nouns must take the article "the," such as in the following example:

Jennifer agreed to meet Mary at the Fraser River Park.

Below you will find some of the rules that can help you identify which proper nouns must take the article "the."

Rule #1: If the word **of** is part of the name, you need to use the.

For example, we say:

the University of British Columbia, but we say
Simon Fraser University.

In this example, the preposition "of" helps specify which university we are talking about (*of British Columbia*).

Rule #2: Place names that are **plural** usually use the.

For example, we say:

the *Phillippines*

but we say

Canada.

We also say:

the *Rocky Mountains*

but we say:

Whistler Mountain.

Rule #3: When a place name includes geographical words like **ocean**, **sea**, **gulf**, **peninsula**, **river** and **desert**, we use the. However, place names with some other geographical words like *lake*, *mountain*, *bay*, *hill*, *island* and *park* do not use an article if they are singular.

For example:

Use <u>the</u> .	No article
<i>The Pacific Ocean</i>	<i>Cultus Lake</i>
<i>The Caspian Sea</i>	<i>Grouse Mountain</i>
<i>The Persian Gulf</i>	<i>English Bay</i>
<i>The Sinai Peninsula</i>	<i>Beacon Hill</i>
<i>The Fraser River</i>	<i>Vancouver Island</i>
<i>The Gobi Desert</i>	<i>Stanley Park</i>

Rule #4: When a place name is the name of a geographical **region**, we use the.

For example, we say:

the *Middle East*

the *Prairies*

the *North*

Rule #5: Names of **organizations** often need the.

For example, we say:

the *World Health Organization*

the *Supreme Court*

the *Vancouver Art Gallery*

the *New Westminster Public Library*

the *Coquitlam Chamber of Commerce*

the *National Hockey League*

the *Conservative Party*

Exercise: Articles with Proper Nouns

Use the rules for articles with proper nouns to fill in the blanks with the or Ø.

1. ____ Douglas College in ____ New Westminster is on ____ Royal Avenue.
2. He was born in ____ Chicago in ____ United States.
3. She went to ____ Langara College on ____ 49th Avenue in ____ Vancouver.
4. ____ St. Lawrence River flows from ____ Lake Superior to ____ Atlantic Ocean.
5. He joined ____ Psychology Department at ____ University of Victoria after he graduated from ____ Queens University in ____ Ottawa.
6. They wanted to visit ____ Great Lakes but they didn't realize ____ Canada was so big. Because ____ Great Lakes were too far, they went to ____ Lake Louise and ____ Banff National Park instead.
7. The camp is on ____ Salt Spring Island in ____ Gulf Islands.
8. ____ Hudson Bay is in ____ North.