Indefinite articles: *a/an*
Definite article: *the*

(Note: articles are sometimes called *determiners*)

Rules:
1. Use an indefinite article before singular count nouns where *a/an* means “one”.
   ex. Eve ate an apple.

2. Use *a*, *an*, or *no article* with generic references (a generic noun is a symbol representing a whole group of people, places, or things). Here, the article means “any/all”.
   ex. Consequently, women have been blamed for sin. Is a woman really that powerful?

3. Use *a/an* when there is no specific person/place/thing; therefore, the implied meaning is “some/any”. Note: for count nouns use *a/an*, but for non-count use *some*.
   ex. You should call a friend and go have some fun.

4. Use *a/an* when the noun is being first introduced to the reader.
   ex. I saw a house that has a big yard. I want to buy the home because the yard would be a perfect place to plant tulips.

5. Use the definite article (*the*) before singular and plural count nouns that have a specific / concrete reference.
   ex. Because the moon was full, I could see the owl swoop down and catch a mouse.

6. Use *the* with superlative nouns.
   ex. Venus is the brightest star in the sky.

7. Use *the* when you mention a noun for the second time.
   ex. I saw a house I would love to buy. The house is in the perfect location.

8. Use *the* when the noun is known to both writer and reader.
   ex. John is studying in the library.

9. Use *the* with the following types of common nouns:
   Time periods: ex. in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening
   Note. Use “at” as follows: at noon, at night, at midnight
   Parts of the body in prepositional phrase: ex. He cut himself on the leg.
   Nouns that name social/economic classes: ex. the middle class, the rich, the poor, the young, the old
   Nouns that name a special group: ex. the government, the media, the press, the disabled
10. Use the with the following types of proper nouns:
Nouns showing a collection (which shows when they contain an “of” phrase):
the University of Southern California, the United States of America

Geographic names containing the word, Kingdom, Republic, or Union: the
Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom

Plural Geographic names: the Philippines, the Rocky Mountains
Bodies of water: the Pacific, the Amazon
Regions: the Middle East, the South, the Pacific Northwest
Points on the globe: the North Pole, the equator
Deserts and forests: the Mojave, the Black forest.
Named sites and roads: the Empire State Building, the 405
Historical periods and events: the Civil War, the Chin dynasty

Named documents, journals: the Constitution, the San Francisco Chronicle, The New
York Times (capitalize if the publications uses it as a title)

Plural family members when referring to all members of the family: the Bushes
(notice use of plural in the name)

Adjectives naming nationalities: the British, the Swiss

Titles that refer to a unique person: the Pope, the President

Electronic sources: the Internet, the World Wide Web

Ships, train, space vehicles: the Titanic, the Orient Express, the Challenger

Exercise (add a/an, the, or 0):
_____ Astronauts who make ___ journey to Mars will have to be tolerant and cooperative. Mark
Shepanek, who is _____ psychologist for _____ National Aeronautics and Space Administration,
said, “Imagine taking _____ car trip with your family. Imagine that you can’t get out of _____ car. Imagine that _____ bathroom and _____ meals are in the car with you. Do you think you might have _____ problem getting along with each other?”

Answer

Astronauts who make the journey to Mars will have to be tolerant and cooperative. Mark Shepanek, who is a psychologist for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, said, “Imagine taking a car trip with your family. Imagine that you can’t get out of the car. Imagine that a bathroom and meals are in the car with you. Do you think you might have a problem getting along with each other?”