

57. CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING ERRORS WITH ARTICLES AND NONCOUNT NOUNS

CHECK NOUNS WITHOUT AN –S OR PLURAL ENDING

1. Underline all nouns that do not have an –s or another plural ending.	2. Check to see that:	3. Correct any mistakes.
<i>The <u>governor</u> signed new immigration <u>law</u>.</i>	there is an <i>a, an, the</i> ¹ for each singular noun ²	<i>The <u>governor</u> signed ^a new immigration <u>law</u>.</i>
<i>First <u>proposal</u> will be more helpful and less expensive.</i> <i>The <u>education</u> is important if you want to improve your <u>life</u>.</i>	there is a <i>the</i> only when the reader knows which specific one you are talking about ³	<i>The first</i> <i>^ First <u>proposal</u> will be more helpful and less expensive.</i> <i>Education</i> <i>^ The Education is important if you want to improve your <u>life</u>.</i>
<i>Huang's <u>study</u> provides an important <u>evidence</u>.</i>	there is not an <i>a</i> or <i>an</i> before a noncount noun ⁴	<i>Huang's <u>study</u> provides an important <u>evidence</u>.</i>

CHECK NOUNS WITH AN –S OR A PLURAL ENDING

1. Double underline nouns with –s or irregular plural ending.	2. Check to see that:	3. Correct any mistakes.
<i>The <u>men</u> and the <u>women</u> have the different <u>goals</u>.</i>	there is a <i>the</i> only when the reader knows which specific ones you mean	<i>Men women</i> <i>^ The men and ^ the women have the different <u>goals</u>.</i>
<i>Huang's study provides important <u>evidences</u>.</i>	there is not a plural –s ending with a noncount noun ⁴	<i>Huang's study provides important ^{evidence} ^ <u>evidences</u>.</i>

¹ Or possessive (*my, your, the government's ...*) or other determiner (*this, that, each, every, any, no, one...*).

² A singular noun is a noun that you can make plural. *Idea* is a singular noun because you can make it plural (*ideas*).

Exceptions to the rule of using *a, an, or the* before a singular noun include expressions such as *at/from home; go/leave home; at/to/in/from school, college; to/at/from work; start/leave college, work; to/in/out of prison; by car, bus, plane; by phone, letter, mail, email*.

³ Exceptions to the rule of using *the* only when the reader knows which specific one you are talking about include: talking about things that are part of everybody's lives (I read *the newspaper*, I take *the bus* everyday); emphasizing a group (*the rich, the poor*); and referring to scientific/technological inventions or instruments (*the computer/the microscope*).

⁴ Noncount nouns are nouns that you cannot make plural. *Information* is a noncount noun because you can not make it plural (*informations*).

Noncount nouns that you should check for include: abstract nouns (*freedom*); academic disciplines (*sociology, mathematics*); categories (*furniture, machinery*); activities (*voting*); liquids and materials (*oil*); and nouns that are noncount in English but are countable in other languages (*advice, evidence, help, information, knowledge, progress, trouble, work*).