Choosing Articles A or The?

In English articles specify if a noun is known (definite) or unknown (indefinite) and if it can be counted. If the noun is general or indefinite, then a or an is used. If the noun is specific, special or definite, then the is used.

**Definite Article: the**
If the noun is a specific, or definite, then the is used.

The definite article “the” can be used before both singular and plural nouns and shows that the noun is a member of a specific group.

- **The** boy is a baseball player.  
- **The** boys are baseball players
- **The** movie won an Oscar.  
- **The** movies won Oscars.

Definite articles note that the noun is unique:

- **The** hospital is on Monroe Street.  
- **The** President of the United States is from Texas.
- **The** hospitals were refurbished.  
- **The** Presidents posed for a picture.

Nouns of an unknown quantity are made specific with the use of the:

- **The** music has been chosen.  
- Guinness was **the** beer chosen.
- (no article) Music lifts my spirits.  
- (no article) Beer goes well with brats.

**Indefinite Articles: a, an, and some**
If the noun is general, referring to any member of the group, then a, or an is used to modify the indefinite singular noun and some is used for plural nouns. In English, a is used before consonant nouns and an before nouns beginning with vowel sounds.

- A song was sung to start the show.  
- **Some** songs were sung to start the show.
- An opera was sung to honor the guest.  
- **Some** operas were written to honor the King.