



Douglas College

Douglas College Learning Centre

## ARTICLES WITH PROPER NOUNS

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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 *Phillipines*

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:

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

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 \_\_\_\_ 49<sup>th</sup> 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.