



Rules about Noun Form & Editing Advice

Rule #1: A singular [Count] noun cannot stand alone in a noun phrase. It needs an article (*a/an/the*) or other determiner (e.g. *this, that, my, each, such*, etc.) in front of it.

Editing Advice: Look for and underline all singular nouns (not plural) that appear without an article or determiner in front of them. Determine whether the noun...

- ...is indefinite or the first mention (put “a” or “an”) or specific (put “the”).
 - Introducing what is new (**first mention**)—*A dog came into our yard. The dog (second mention) looked mean.*
 - “Any” use—*Come on Sunday afternoon and please bring a dish (any dish) to pass.*
 - Labeling use—*John is a classical musician.*
- ...refers to all members of a group or refers to more than one. These nouns usually appear in plural form (usually with –s ending). Use *many* (not *much*), *few* (not *little*), *number of* (not *amount of*) in front of these nouns.
 - **Thermometers** contain mercury, which is a carcinogen.

Rule #2: Nouns preceded by “the” refer to specific, not “general” or indefinite nouns. Readers seeing “the X” will ask “which X?”

Editing Advice: Look for and underline all nouns that appear with “the” preceding them. Decide whether the noun is really “specific” reference. If it seems to be referring to “all” or the noun “in general,” remove “the.” If the noun is a countable noun, add “s” or “a/an.”

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Activity: Use the rules above and the editing advice to edit the following passage to make sure the nouns are in the correct form and have the correct articles.

1. Practical intelligence can be influenced in many ways. Being born into middle or upper class can certainly cultivate in one the sense of entitlement, but growing up in the underprivileged environment can make one a skillful reader of certain situation, and change of environments can train one’s practical intelligence.

2. While our general assumption that formal education is vital to make us intelligent at whatever we do, the experience is actually much more vital.
3. Robinson mentions that hierarchy of subjects in today's school kills students' creativity. This hierarchy is also prevalent in my schooling, where all people think that science and mathematics are the best subjects that they can choose as their major. As a result, more than half of the people in my class of 2010 decided to attend UC Berkeley, which is known for excellent science and engineering program.
4. In "The Trouble with Geniuses," the author backs up his idea that the social savvy, namely the practical intelligence, comes from families and social class by citing the studies of the sociologist Annette Lareau.
5. Moreover, an "academic inflation" has become a growing problem because current education system has produced more and more graduates since the beginning of the century, which means one's degree is less helpful in finding a job.