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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use the.</th>
<th>No article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>Cultus Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Caspian Sea</td>
<td>Grouse Mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Persian Gulf</td>
<td>English Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sinai Peninsula</td>
<td>Beacon Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fraser River</td>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gobi Desert</td>
<td>Stanley Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Ø.

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 _____ 49th 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.