DECISION TREE FOR ARTICLES

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NOUN PHRASE

GENERAL Meaning

-- **1st mention**
-- **all / any**
-- **one**

- **COUNT**
  - **Sg** → **a, an**
  - **Pl** → **X**
- **NON-COUNT** (Sg) → **X**

SPECIFIC Meaning

1. **2nd mention**
2. **only one** possible (unique reference)
3. **shared knowledge** between Reader & Writer
4. **post-modification**
   - prepositional phrase that is part of the Noun it modifies
   - relative (adjective) clause

- **NON-COUNT** (Sg) → **the**
- **COUNT**
  - **Sg** → **the**
  - **Pl** → **the**

NP + prep + NP — EX: ***the*** *nature* ***of*** *water* (**vs**: Water is a necessity for sustaining life.)

NP + who/whom/which… — EX: Do you see ***the*** *man* ***whom*** I described to you?

5. Superlative — the most + Adj / the Adj+est — EX: ***the most exciting*** story I ever heard; ***the longest*** essay I have written

6. Ordinal number — ***the first, the second, the third, the thirty-first***, etc.

7. Positive "of" phrases with plurals — EX: ***one of the + N***

8. Specifiers — EX: ***the same/the sole/the only/the chief/the principal + N***

9. Names of theories, effects, devices ... + Noun — EX: ***the Doppler Effect, the Golden Rule, the Utilitarian Principle***