How we talk about nouns (things):

**plural** (shops) **countable** (book) **common** (table) **abstract** (love)

**singular** (shop) **uncountable** (food) **proper** (United Kingdom)

**a, an (1)**

* singular countable nouns
* unknown / first mention
* general
* **an** is the same as **a** but we use it before a vowel sound

**no article (\*or “some”)**

* uncountable nouns\*
* plural nouns\*
* abstract nouns\*
* proper nouns
* things when you are talking in general

**the (1 or more)**

* countable nouns – singular or plural
* known / later mentions
* specific things
* specific uncountable / plural nouns
* specific abstract nouns
* use **the** when you both know what is being talked about
* use **the** before superlative adjectives and ordinal numbers
* pronounced *thii* before vowel sounds
* We often need to write an article before a noun – *but not always!*
* There are only 3 articles – **a**, **an**, and **the** – but they cause a lot of errors
* **the** is the most common word in written English; **a** is #6 and **an** is #32 (*Talk a Lot Foundation Course* p.3.9)
* Some languages don’t have articles, e.g. Polish; in English we need them to help make the rhythm and give more information
* Use **some** with plural countable nouns and with uncountable nouns; use **any** in question and negative forms
* Some nouns can be both countable and uncountable depending on the situation, e.g. cheese
* An article goes before a noun modifier, e.g. an adjective or intensifier, e.g. “a horse”; “a big horse”; “a really big horse”
* We can use a possessive adjective (e.g. my, your, our, etc.) or a determiner (e.g. this, that, these, those) instead of an article