



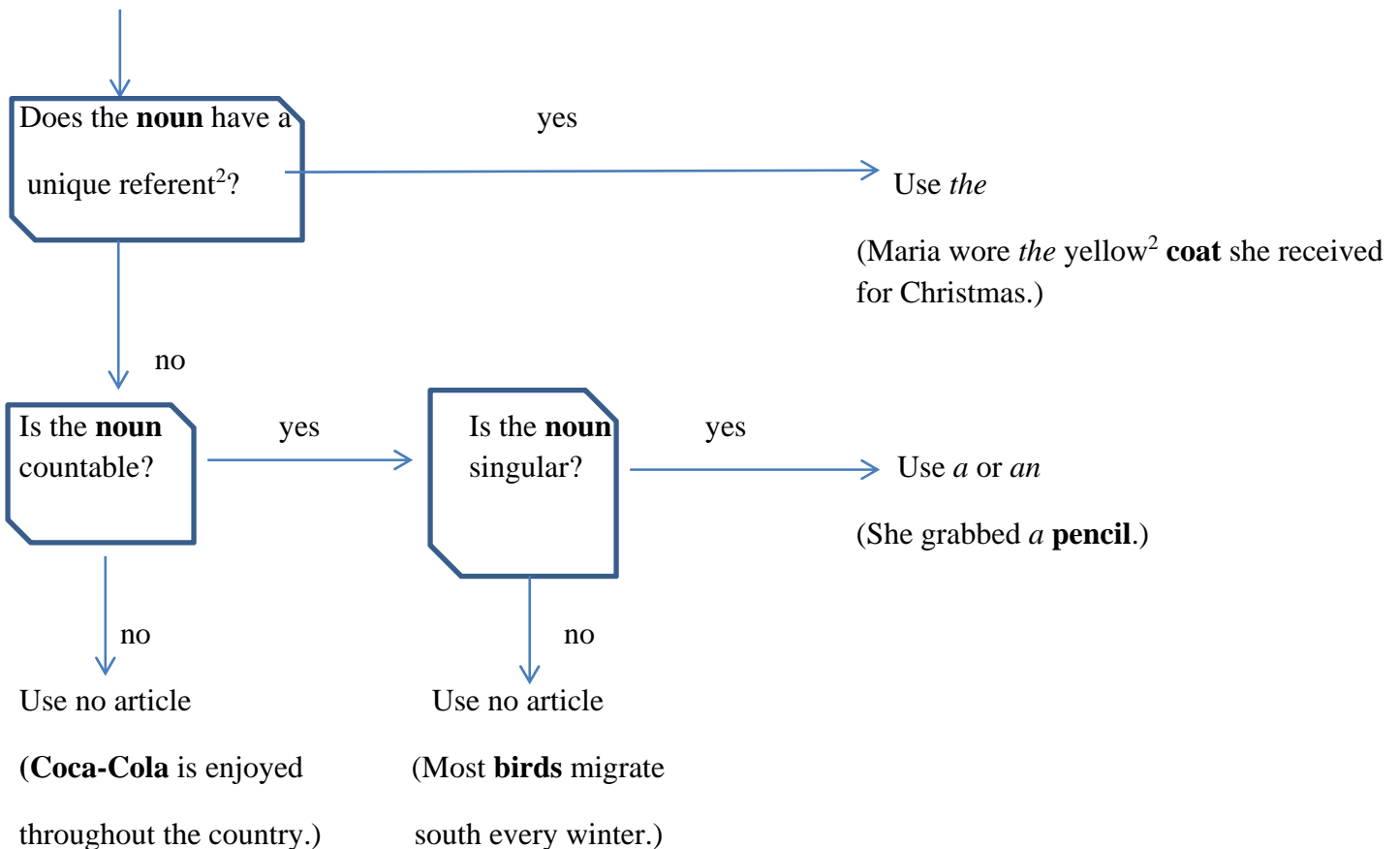
# Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services

## Articles: A, An, or The

The below diagram is presented in Patrick Hartwell's article, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar."<sup>1</sup> Originally presented by Thomas N. Huckin and Leslie A. Olsen, it provides students a guide for understanding when to use the definite article *the* or the indefinite articles *a* and *an*. Of course, in some situations, no article is necessary at all.

Hartwell points out that there are limitations to such a rule, for "article choice in English is less a matter of rule than of idiom, real-world knowledge, and stylistic choice" (217). However, for non-native English speakers the rule can be very valuable; it also can assist native speakers in explaining when and why we use one article over another.

ENTER NOUN



<sup>1</sup>Hartwell, Patrick. "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Victor Villanueva and Kristin L. Arola. 3rd ed. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2011. 205-33. Print.

<sup>2</sup>A unique referent is a specific person or object that a term refers to. For example, *the* house on the corner has a unique referent. It is not any house but a specific one that is on that specific corner.