

The 2 (school / the school etc.)

A

Compare **school** and **the school**:

Ellie is ten years old. Every day she goes **to school**. She's **at school** now. **School** starts at 9 and finishes at 3.

We say a child goes **to school** or is **at school** (as a student). We are not thinking of a specific school. We are thinking of **school** as a general idea – children learning in a classroom.



Today Ellie's mother wants to speak to her daughter's teacher. So she has gone to **the school** to see her. She's at **the school** now.

Ellie's mother is not a student. She is not 'at school', she doesn't 'go to school'. If she wants to see Ellie's teacher, she goes to **the school** (=Ellie's school, a specific building).

B

We use **prison** (or **jail**), **hospital**, **university**, **college** and **church** in a similar way. We do not use **the** when we are thinking of the general idea of these places and what they are used for.

Compare:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ken's brother is in prison for robbery. (He is a prisoner. We are not thinking of a specific prison.) <input type="checkbox"/> Joe had an accident last week. He was taken to hospital. He's still in hospital now. (as a patient) <input type="checkbox"/> When I leave school, I plan to go to university / go to college. (as a student) <input type="checkbox"/> Sally's father goes to church every Sunday. (to take part in a religious service) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ken went to the prison to visit his brother. (He went as a visitor, not as a prisoner.) <input type="checkbox"/> Jane has gone to the hospital to visit Joe. She's at the hospital now. (as a visitor, not as a patient) <input type="checkbox"/> I went to the university to meet Professor Thomas. (as a visitor, not as a student) <input type="checkbox"/> Some workmen went to the church to repair the roof. (not for a religious service) |
|--|---|

With most other places, you need **the**. For example, **the station**, **the cinema**, (see Units 72C and 73C).

C

We say **go to bed** / **be in bed** etc. (*not* the bed):

- I'm going **to bed** now. Goodnight.
- Do you ever have breakfast **in bed**?

but I sat down on **the bed**. (a specific piece of furniture)

go to work / **be at work** / **start work** / **finish work** etc. (*not* the work):

- Chris didn't go to **work** yesterday.
- What time do you usually finish **work**?

go home / **come home** / **arrive home** / **get home** / **be at home** etc. :

- It's late. Let's go **home**.
- Will you be at **home** tomorrow afternoon?

D

We say **go to sea** / **be at sea** (without **the**) when the meaning is 'go/be on a voyage':

- Keith works on ships. He's **at sea** most of the time.

but I'd like to live near **the sea**.

- It can be dangerous to swim in **the sea**.

Exercises

74.1 Complete each sentence using a preposition (to/at/in etc.) + one of these words:

bed home ~~hospital~~ hospital prison school university work

- 1 Two people were injured in the accident and were taken to hospital.
- 2 In Britain, children from the age of five have to go _____.
- 3 Mark didn't go out last night. He stayed _____.
- 4 There is a lot of traffic in the morning when everybody is going _____.
- 5 Kate's mother has just had an operation. She is still _____.
- 6 When Sophie leaves school, she wants to study economics _____.
- 7 Ben never gets up before 9 o'clock. It's 8.30 now, so he is still _____.
- 8 If people commit crimes, they may be sent _____.

74.2 Complete the sentences with **school** or **the school**.

- 1 Why aren't your children at school today? Are they ill?
- 2 When he was younger, Tim hated _____.
- 3 There were some parents waiting outside _____ to meet their children.
- 4 _____ usually starts at 8.30 in the morning.
- 5 A: How do your children get to and from _____? By bus?
B: No, they walk. _____ isn't very far.
- 6 What sort of job does Emily want to do when she leaves _____?

74.3 Some of these sentences need **the**. Correct them where necessary.

- 1 a 'How old is university?' 'About 200 years.' the university
- b In your country do many people go to university? OK
- c If you want to get a degree, you normally have to study at university.
- d This is a small town, but university is the biggest in the country.
- 2 a My brother has always been healthy. He's never been in hospital.
- b When Ann was ill, I went to hospital to visit her. When I was there, I met Lisa who is a nurse at hospital.
- c A woman was injured in the accident and was taken to hospital.
- 3 a John's mother is a regular churchgoer. She goes to church every Sunday.
- b John himself doesn't go to church.
- c John went to church to take some pictures of the building.
- 4 a Why is she in prison? What did she do?
- b A few days ago firefighters were called to prison to put out a fire.
- c Do you think too many people are sent to prison?

74.4 Which is correct?

- 1 How did you get home / ~~get to home~~ after the party? (get home is correct)
- 2 I like to read in bed / in the bed before I go to sleep.
- 3 Shall we meet after work / after the work tomorrow evening?
- 4 I love swimming in sea / in the sea.
- 5 It's nice to travel around, but there's no place like home / like the home!
- 6 Sam likes to go to bed / go to the bed early, and get up early.
- 7 I didn't sleep well in the hotel. Bed / The bed was uncomfortable.
- 8 How long did it take to cross the ocean? How long were you at sea / at the sea?
- 9 What time do you usually start work / the work in the morning?