Unit 74

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:

- Ken's brother is **in prison** for robbery. (He is a prisoner. We are not thinking of a specific prison.)
- Joe had an accident last week. He was taken **to hospital**. He's still **in hospital** now. (as a patient)
- When I leave school, I plan to go **to university** / go **to college**. (as a student)
- Sally's father goes **to church** every Sunday. (to take part in a religious service)

- Ken went to **the prison** to visit his brother. (He went as a visitor, not as a prisoner.)
- Jane has gone to **the hospital** to visit Joe. She's at **the hospital** now. (as a visitor, not as a patient)
- I went to **the university** to meet Professor Thomas. (as a visitor, not as a student)
- 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**.

The → Units 72–73, 75–78 Prepositions (**at school** / **in hospital** etc.) → Units 123–125
Home → Unit 126C American English → Appendix 7

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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?

→ Additional exercise 29 (page 319)

LIVEWORKSHEETS