

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:

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

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

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

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** / do something **at home** etc. :

- ☐ It's late. Let's **go home**.
- ☐ I don't go out to work. I work **at home**.

Exercises

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

- Why aren't your children at school today? Are they ill?
- When he was younger, Ben hated, but he enjoys it now.
- There were some parents waiting outside to meet their children.
- What time does start in the morning?
- How do your children get to and from? Do you take them?
- What was the name of you attended?
- What does Emily want to do when she leaves?
- My children walk to isn't very far.

74.2 Which is right?

- Where is university / the university? Is it near here? (the university is correct)
 - Neil left school and got a job. He didn't want to go to university / the university.
 - In your country, what proportion of the population study at university / the university?
 - This is a small town, but university / the university is the biggest in the country.
- My brother has always been healthy. He's never been in hospital / the hospital.
 - When my friend was ill, I went to hospital / the hospital to see her.
 - When I was visiting my friend, I met Lisa, who is a nurse at hospital / the hospital.
 - I saw an accident. A woman was injured and was taken to hospital / the hospital.
- Why is she in prison / the prison? What crime did she commit?
 - There was a fire at prison / the prison. Firefighters were called to put it out.
 - Do you think too many people are sent to prison / the prison?
- John's mother is a regular churchgoer. She goes to church / the church every Sunday.
 - John himself doesn't go to church / the church.
 - The village is very nice. You should visit church / the church. It's interesting.

74.3 Complete the sentences. Choose from the box.

- How did you get home after the party?
- How do you usually go in the morning? By bus?
- Sam likes to go to early and get up early.
- I don't have my phone. I left it
- 'Have you seen my keys?' 'Yes, they're on
- Shall we meet tomorrow evening?
- I like to read before going to sleep.
- It was a long tiring journey. We arrived very late.
- Tom usually finishes at five o'clock.
- It's nice to travel around, but there's no place

bed
the bed
in bed
~~home~~
home
at home
like home
work
to work
after work

74.4 Complete the sentences. Choose **at/in/to + hospital, school** etc.

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

- Kate's mother has to have an operation. She'll be in hospital for a few days.
- In your country, from what age do children have to go?
- Mark didn't go out last night. He stayed
- There is a lot of traffic in the morning when people are going
- When Sophie leaves school, she wants to study psychology
- Ben never gets up before 9 o'clock. It's 8.30 now, so he is still
- The accident wasn't serious. Nobody had to go
- If people commit crimes, they may end up