

The (2) (school / the school)

A

Compare school and the school:



Claudia is ten years old. Every day she goes to school. She's at school now. School begins at 9:00 and finishes at 3:00.

When we say a child goes to school or is in school (as a student), we are not necessarily thinking of a particular school. We are thinking of school as a general idea.



Today Claudia'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.

Claudia's mother is not a student. She is not "in school," she doesn't "go to school." But if she wants to see Claudia's teacher, she goes to the school (= Claudia's school, a particular school).

B

We use prison/jail, 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:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ken's brother is in prison/jail for robbery. (He is a prisoner. We are not thinking of a particular prison.) ■ When I finish high school, I want to go to college. ■ Mrs. Kelly goes to church every Sunday. (= to a religious service) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ken went to the prison / the jail to visit his brother. (He went as a visitor, not as a prisoner.) ■ Dan is a student at the college where I used to work. (= a particular college) ■ The workers went to the church to repair the roof. (not for a religious service) |
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With most other places, you need the. For example, the hospital / the bank / the station. See Units 69C and 70D.

C

Bed work home

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

- It's time to go to bed now.
- This morning I had breakfast in bed.

but ■ I sat down on the bed. (= a particular piece of furniture)

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

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

We also say go home / come 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 is a sailor. He spends most of his life at sea.

but ■ I'd like to live near the sea.

- It can be dangerous to swim in the sea.

Exercises

71.1 Complete the sentences using a preposition (*to/at/in*, etc.) + one of these words. You can use the words more than once.

bed college home prison school work

1. When Julie finishes high school, she wants to study economics *in college*.
2. In Mexico, children from the age of seven have to go _____.
3. Mark didn't go out last night. He stayed _____.
4. I'll have to hurry. I don't want to be late _____.
5. There is a lot of traffic in the morning when everybody is going _____.
6. Bill never gets up before 9:00. It's 8:30 now, so he is still _____.
7. If you commit a serious crime, you could be sent _____.

71.2 Complete the sentences with the word given (*school*, etc.). Use *the* where necessary.

1. school

- a) Every semester parents are invited to *the school* to meet the teachers.
- b) Why aren't your children in *school* today? Are they sick?
- c) When he was younger, Ted hated _____.
- d) What time does _____ usually start in your country?
- e) A: How do your children get home from _____? By bus?
B: No, they walk. _____ isn't very far away.
- f) What kind of work does Jenny want to do when she finishes _____?
- g) There were some people waiting outside _____ to meet their children.

2. college

- a) In your country, do many people go to _____?
- b) The Smiths have four children in _____ at the same time.
- c) This is only a small town, but _____ is one of the best in the country.

3. church

- a) John's mother is a regular churchgoer. She goes to _____ every Sunday.
- b) John himself doesn't go to _____.
- c) John went to _____ to take some pictures of the building.

4. prison

- a) In many places people are in _____ because of their political beliefs.
- b) The other day the fire department was called to _____ to put out a fire.
- c) The judge decided to fine the man \$500 instead of sending him to _____.

5. home/work/bed

- a) I like to read in _____ before I go to sleep.
- b) It's nice to travel, but there's no place like _____!
- c) Should we meet after _____ tomorrow?
- d) If I'm feeling tired, I go to _____ early.
- e) What time do you usually start _____ in the morning?
- f) The economic situation is very bad. Many people are out of _____.

6. sea

- a) There's a nice view from the window. You can see _____.
- b) It was a long voyage. We were at _____ for four weeks.
- c) I love swimming in _____.