

Articles with school, hospital and bed

CEFR A2-B1 • 20 questions • A4 / US Letter

No article when the place is used for its normal purpose; a or the when it is just a building or a specific one.

The rule

The zero article: the normal purpose

- Go to school, be at school, be in class: the purpose is learning, so no article is used.
- Go to bed, be in bed, stay in bed: the purpose is sleeping or resting.
- Go to hospital, be in hospital: the purpose is treatment. American English often says "in the hospital".
- Go to work, be at work, go to prison, go to church, go to university, go to court: the activity matters, not the building.

The when the building matters

- Use the when you mean a particular place: "The school is next to the park."
- Use the when the visit has a purpose different from the usual one: "I went to the school to meet my son's teacher."
- Use the for the physical object: "Sit on the bed", "The hospital was built in 1902".
- Use the after a preposition when the listener knows which place you mean: "Meet me at the church on the corner."

A or an: one example of many

- Use a or an when the place is one of many and not yet identified: "There is a school at the end of the street."
- Use a with furniture and objects: "I need a bed for the night", "She works in a hospital".
- A is for a new piece of information; the is for information the listener already knows.
- The choice is about the listener's knowledge and the purpose, not about the size of the place.

Bed, home and work without articles

- Go home has no article or preposition: "I went home at six."
- Go to bed, get into bed and get out of bed are the fixed patterns.
- At work, go to work and leave work take no article when they mean the activity.
- A job is countable and takes an article: "She has a new job", not "a new work".

British and American differences

- British English: in hospital, at university, in future.
- American English: in the hospital, at college and usually "in the future".

- Both varieties use the zero article with school, bed, work, prison and church.
- Choose one variety and stay consistent; both are correct in their own system.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. Most children in this area go to ___ school by bus.

2. I went to ___ school to talk to my daughter's teacher.

3. She is in ___ hospital recovering from surgery.

4. ___ hospital on the hill was built in 1890.

5. I usually go to ___ bed at about eleven.

6. The cat is asleep on ___ bed.

7. He goes to ___ work by train every morning.

8. She has ___ new job at the bank.

9. My cousin is in ___ prison for theft.

10. We walked past ___ prison on our way home.

11. The family goes to ___ church every Sunday.

12. There is ___ church at the end of our street.

13. She studies at ___ university in Vienna.

14. The building next to the library is ___ university.

15. I went home ___ six and went straight to bed.

16. She has to be in ___ court tomorrow morning.

17. ___ old hospital is now a museum.

18. He stayed in ___ bed all day with flu.

19. Put your bag on ___ bed, not on the floor.

20. My brother works at ___ hospital in the city centre.

Answer key

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1. **no article** — The normal purpose of school takes the zero article.
2. **the** — The visit is specific and not the usual school activity, so the article the is needed.
3. **no article** — Zero article for hospital as treatment in British English.
4. **The** — The building itself takes the definite article.
5. **no article** — Go to bed means sleep and takes no article.
6. **the** — Here bed is a piece of furniture, so it takes the article.
7. **no article** — Work as an activity takes the zero article.
8. **a** — Job is countable and takes a or an; work would be uncountable here.
9. **no article** — Prison as an institution takes the zero article.
10. **the** — The building on the route takes the definite article.
11. **no article** — Church as a religious activity takes no article.
12. **a** — A church introduces one example among many.
13. **no article** — University as a study activity takes the zero article.
14. **a** — A university presents one example of a building to the listener.
15. **at** — Go home takes no preposition and no article; at six gives the time.
16. **no article** — Court as a legal process takes the zero article.
17. **The** — The building is specific and defined by old, so the definite article the is needed.
18. **no article** — Stay in bed means rest and takes no article.
19. **the** — A particular piece of furniture takes the article.
20. **a** — A hospital introduces the workplace to the listener for the first time.