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English In A Minute

At school or at the school



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

I'm going to tell you how we use **the** with public buildings.

Often, when we talk about public buildings with prepositions of place, what we're really talking about is the main reason that people go there.

If you're at school, at college or at university, you're studying.

Now in British English, if that's what you're doing, don't use **the** with the name of the building.

Here are some other examples:

If you're in hospital, you're ill.

If you're at church, you're praying.

And if you're in court or worse - in prison, you're in trouble.

If we do use **the** in these expressions, then it probably means somebody's doing something else.

Natasha's at the hospital - she's visiting her brother.

I'll meet you at the school, then we'll go to the party.

Now it's not every public building - it only works for some, but if you're talking about the most common activity, don't use **the**.

If you're talking about something else, you can.