

Bed / Home / Work / Town

(This is an extract from my book: A and The Explained)

Bed

Bed is a strange word! If we don't use an article, it means a place where we sleep, not a particular object.

- The children are in Ø bed.
- We didn't get out of Ø bed until after one o'clock.
- She got home and went straight to Ø bed.

But when we are thinking about a bed as an object, we use articles in the normal way:

- She sat on the bed in my room [I choose 'the' because the listener knows which bed I mean].
- I need to buy a new bed [I choose 'a' because I don't know which bed yet, I'm not talking about a specific one].

Home

The word home is also a bit strange. We usually use 'no article':

- They went Ø home.*
- I stayed at Ø home.
- Julie works from Ø home.
- It's time to go Ø home.
- Lucy is at Ø home at the moment.

*Notice we don't need to with 'go home' (not 'go to home').

But we can use an article with home when it means 'the building that somebody lives (or used to live) in'. In this case we use articles in the normal way.

- We visited the home of Jackie Kennedy.
- My sister has made her flat into a beautiful home.

[It's also possible to use 'home' as short for 'retirement home' or similar expression. We use articles in the normal way: Her grandmother is too frail to stay in her own house, so she lives in a (retirement) home.]

Work (used as a noun)

When we use 'work' to mean a place, then we don't need to use an article:

- She's at Ø work.
- I arrive at Ø work at nine.
- We leave Ø work every day at six.
- You should go to Ø work earlier.

When we use 'work' to mean a project that we are working on now, 'work' is a normal uncountable noun. So, we can use 'the' if we are talking about some specific work that the listener knows about:

- The work I'm doing at the moment is very interesting.

[An exception is when work means a piece of art/literature/music. In this case work is a normal countable noun].

Town

When we are thinking about the town centre near to us, we often use 'no article' with certain expressions.

- In town: John's in town at the moment.
- Go into town: Shall we go into town this afternoon?
- Leave town: He left town after he argued with his wife.

Town can also be a normal noun.

- The town where I live is quite small [we use the because the listener knows which one].