

## Prepositions: In, On, and At (with specific times and places)

The prepositions **in**, **on**, and **at** can be used to indicate *time* and *place*. Notice how they are used in the following situations:

Preposition	Time	Place
In	Year, Month, In 1999, In December	Country, State, City In Japan, In Utah, In Taipei
On	Day, Date On Saturday, On May 1	Street On Main Street, On 1st Ave.
At	Time At 8:00, At 7:30	Address At 815 East Main Street

In many languages, there is only *one* preposition for the above situations. In English there are three. Just remember that **in** usually indicates the "largest" time or place, and **at** usually indicates the "smallest" time or place.

Examples:

A: Where's your office?

B: *In* Taipei, Taiwan.

A: Really? What part of Taipei?

B: It's *on* Chung Shan North Road.

A: I know that area. Where exactly is it?

B: It's *at* 105 Chung Shan North Road, next to the bookstore.

C: When is the wedding?

D: It's *in* June.

C: What day?

D: It's *on* Saturday, the 25th.

C: What time?

D: It starts *at* 6:00.

## Prepositions with articles and locations

When talking about locations, use *at* to indicate the general vicinity or area, and *in* to indicate inside the building, enclosed area, etc. For example:

at the swimming pool (on site)	in the swimming pool (in the pool itself i.e. in the water)
at the post office/bank (general)	in the post office/bank (inside the building)

at the zoo (visitors, general area)                      in the zoo (animals in their cages)

at school    in the classroom

## Sample sentences:

I met my wife at the theater. (while watching a movie)

I spilled my drink in the theater (on the floor of the building)

She works at the library on Wednesdays.

She found a rare coin in the library (building).

Dr. Jones works at the hospital every day.

John was in the hospital for a week with a broken leg.

For school, prison, and church, *the* is used to indicate the building. *No article* indicates the general situation.

Note the following:

### "practice"/situation

in school (studying, listening to teacher, etc.)

in jail/prison (staying there as a criminal)

in church (praying, listening to a sermon, etc.)

### building

in *the* school (building)

in *the* jail/prison (temporary)

in *the* church (building)

### Where's Dad?

in church (attending services)

at church

in prison (He committed a crime.)

in the church (fixing the windows)

at the church

at the prison (visiting his friend)

## For Practice: See

[At-On-In Used in Time and Dates \(from The Internet TESL Journal\)](#)

[Prepositions : At, In and On \(from The Internet TESL Journal\)](#)

**See also:**

**Grammar :** [Prepositions and Time Words](#), [Prepositions of Location](#)

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