

Articles: the theatre v hospital

Q: Regarding the use of the article, my learners have learnt - We use THE for a place in town e.g. *going to the theatre, to the cinema* and then: *There was a car accident and some of the victims were taken TO HOSPITAL,....?* Is there a rule?

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A: The uses of the definite article and what is called zero article (no article) are often very confusing, both for learners to learn and teachers to teach!

When it comes to names of services and facilities in a town, it can be even more confusing. But perhaps there are some patterns we can discern.

to hospital actually follows the main pattern = an abstract noun representing the concept of where ill/injured people go.

In this sense (i.e. a concept) it follows the same pattern as *he went to school; she was at work; he's in prison*.

We're going to the theatre, the cinema, the pub (but not *the restaurant!*) are exceptions, perhaps as places of entertainment