Japanese 1010 Particles:

を、に、で、へ、は、and が

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を | Marks the direct object.

Direct object: a noun that is the recipient of a transitive verb.
Transitive verb: a verb that is acting directly on a noun.

Transitive English Examples:
I took a cookie.
I mailed a postcard.
I ate takoyaki.

A verb is transitive if the sentence no longer makes sense without the direct object.
"I took" and "I mailed" don't make sense by themselves. The verbs here are transitive. (SVO sentence structure in English.)

If you take away the direct object and the sentence still makes sense but the meaning is different, the verb is transitive. "I ate" makes sense, but it is not the same as "I ate takoyaki." In the same context or conversation, these sentences have different meanings.

This same concept applies to identifying transitive verbs in Japanese for using を.

ほん**を**よみます。I will read a book.

The reading will be done **to** the book.

を is the bridge that lets nouns be acted on by transitive verbs.

Noun ——— を ——— Verb

(わたし は) くるま**を**かいます。(I) will buy a car.
(わたし は) しゃしん**を**とります。(I) will take a picture.
(わたし は) ねこに えさ**を**やります。(I) will feed the cat.
Literal translation: (I) will feed (animal) food to the cat.

Verb + を + する (します)
する means to do. So, it often pairs with を and a noun to mean that you do/are doing/will do something. In this context, する is transitive because someone is acting on something to complete an action and requires を.

(わたし は) やきゅう**を**します。(I) play/will play baseball.
(わたし は) りょうり**を**します。(I) cook/will cook.

に   Marks a **specific** location.
Marks where nouns are in space.
Used with non-action verbs.
Implies a static state of being/doing or a permanant location of being/doing.

に as a Specific Location Marker:
に marks specific locations where nouns are or were. However, keep in mind that if any verb besides a static verb is used in the sentence, に will be replaced with で. Static verbs are explained more below and on the で handout.

わたしのすんでいるまち**に** ガソリンスタンドがたくさんあります。
There are a lot of gas stations where I live.

せんしゅう、きょうと**に**いきました。I went to Kyoto last week.

に as a Marker for Existence in Space:
When used as a marker for existence in space, に marks the direction where the subject is. These are directions such up (うえ), under (した), left (ひだり), and right (みぎ).

りんごは せんせいの あたまの うえ**に**あります。The apple is on top of the teacher's head.

コンビニは ひだり**に**あります。The convenience store is on the left.

に as a Marker for Static Being/Doing:
Static or non-action verbs in Japanese are those that are done for a relatively long period of time or are (mostly) permanent. For example, where you live is a static condition and will take に. Other non-action verbs include activities that are static, such as sitting down.

かぞくは がいこく**に** すんでいます。(My) family lives in a foreign country.

(わたし は) いす**に**すわりました。(I) sat in a chair.

に as a Marker for Time:
When it comes to time, it is important to remember that generic time references like every day (まいにち), next week (らいしゅう), and this morning (けさ) do not take に. Specific times are marked with に.
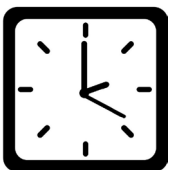
(わたし は) ごぜんはちじ**に** しごとがあります。(I) have work at 8 a.m.

かれは じゅうくじさんじゅっぷん**に** なくなりました。He died at 19:30.
(Military time is often used.)

で　Marks a location of an action or event.

で　Marks tools that are used to complete an action.

で　Marks the means by which an action is done.

で for the Location of Actions and Events:

When it comes to verbs, で is used to mark the locations of "true" action verbs. In comparison, に marks the locations of non-action or static verbs. Verbs such as いく (to go), もどる (to return), かえる (to return home), くる (to come), and すむ (to live somewhere) are considered static. Locations that describe these verbs will take に instead. The locations of almost all other verbs will take で.

(わたし は) こうえん**で** ジョギングをしました。
(I) went jogging at the park.

(わたし は) あのかいしゃ**で** はたらきました。
(I) worked at that company.

(わたし は) そのレストラン**で** からいラーメンをたべました。
(I) ate spicy ramen at that restaurant.

で as a Marker of Tools or the Means to Complete an Action:

The means by which an action is done and the tools used to complete an action fall under the same umbrella of use for で. Tools that are used to do an action, such as pens for writing and axes for chopping wood, are marked with で. Modes of transportation to a location and what language you use to speak are examples of the means you use to complete an action.

(わたし は) ほうちょう**で** ゆびをきりました。
(I) cut my finger with a kitchen knife.

(わたし は) かなづち**で** ほんだなをつくりました。
(I) built a bookshelf with a hammer.

(わたし は) バス**で** だいがくに いきます。
(I) go to college by bus.

にほんご**で** いってください。
Please speak in Japanese.

へ

Marks a **generic/broad** location.
"Around this/that area."
Marks compass directions.
Implies a direction of movement.
Marks letter and email recipients.

When へ is used as a particle, it is pronounced "eh." Its hiragana pronunciation is "heh."

へ to Mark General Locations and Compass Directions:

When へ marks a location that is a proper noun (like India or Tokyo), へ implies that the subject is around that area or is going in the direction of that location. When compass directions are used, へ marks the direction.

ひこうきは きた**へ**とびました。The plane flew north.
ふねは ちゅうごく**へ**むかいました。The ship headed towards China.
(わたし は) タイムズスクエア**へ**いきました。(I) went to the area around Times Square.

へ and Directionality:
へ and に can sometimes be used to say similar things. However, they're slightly different. へ inherently implies a sense of direction and movement. In comparison, に states a location but has no sense of where that place is relative to you.

たいふうが おきなわ**へ**きます。A typhoon is coming to the (general) Okinawa area.

たいふうは おきなわにきました。A typhoon came to Okinawa.

へ is used to say that the typhoon is coming because the typhoon itself has movement towards Okinawa **and** へ is marking Okinawa as a general/broad location. In the past tense (second example), に is used because there is no longer movement from the typhoon and you're singling out Okinawa (a specific location in this context) as the place where the typhoon hit.

へ is like the top of an arrow to show direction.
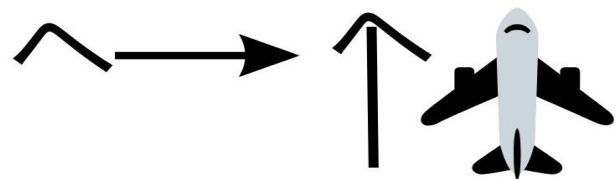
へ for Email and Letter Recipients:
へ is also used in letters and emails to mark the recipient.

かおり せんせい**へ** (to Kaori Sensei)
ともの せんせい**へ** (to Tomono Sensei)
みんな**へ** (to everybody or everyone)

は vs が

は and が are similar in that they both function as subject markers. However, their specifics vary. Generally, は functions as the standard subject marker and が marks subjects for emphasis.

Theme and Marking Parts of a Theme:
The basic function of は is to mark the subject of a sentence or to introduce a theme. In sentences that don't use が, は forms many standard sentence structures.

たかはしさん**は** おかねもちです。Takahashi is rich.
たけうちさん**は** エアコンをなおしました。Takeuchi fixed the air conditioner.

In these same types of sentence structures, が can be added in to identify a part of a larger theme that is being emphasized. Here, は is used to introduce and mark a theme while が marks the part.

ナオシタエアコン**は** たけうちさん**が** エアコンをなおしました。

In this example, ナオシタエアコン is the name of a fictional air conditioning repair company—Repaired Air Conditioning. The meaning of this sentence translates to "Speaking of Repaired Air Conditioning, Takeuchi (a company employee that both speakers are familiar with) repaired (my) air conditioner." は introduces the theme, but が identifies the subject that carries the meaning of the sentence.

Another example:
さっか**は**、だざいおさむさん**が** とてもゆうめいです。Speaking of authors, Osamu Dazai is very famous.

New and Old Information:
When distinguishing that something is new information to the speaker's audience, が is used to mark the subject. When everybody in the audience knows the information, は is used.

ジョージ・ワシントン**は** アメリカのだいとうりょうでした。
George Washington was a president of the United States.

サンディ・チークス**が** あのちいさいまちのしちょうです。
Sandy Cheeks is the mayor of that small town. (Information the audience didn't know.)

は vs が

Attention and Judgement:
When it comes to scenarios that a speaker wants to draw attention to (good and bad), は and が are used. が is used to emphasize something that the audience should pay attention to. Though, this is for scenarios that are exciting, cute, beautiful, interesting, etc. が is not for bad scenarios as the statement would then be judgmental. If the speaker is placing judgment, then は is used. In both cases, these are in-the-moment observations.

ほら! あそこに にじ**が**あります。Look! There's a rainbow over there.
やまのうえに ゆき**が**あります。There's snow on top of the mountain (and you just noticed).

If you catch your sibling eating your snack, you might say「あのおかし**は** わたしのです」. That (from far away) snack is mine.

Likewise, if you see a customer being rude to a cashier, you might tell your friend that「あのひと**は** ぶさほうです。」That person (a little way over there) is rude.

Contrast and Exclusion:
If you want to contrast two things (this is that but this other thing isn't), は is used to mark both subjects that are being contrasted.

いま、ユタ**は** さむいです。でもオースとラリア**は** あついです。
Utah is cold right now. However, it's hot in Australia.

このいろ**は** きれいですが、そのいろ**は** ちょっと...
This color is pretty but that color is a little… (ugly and you don't want to say it).

On the other hand, if you want to exclude something as different from a previously mentioned subject, が is used to mark the subject that is excluded. Exclusion implies that the excluded subject is different from a group. Otherwise, the remark would be a contrast (group to group or single subject to single subject).

すべてのきんじょのいえ**は** おおきいですが、このいえ**が** いちばんおおきいです。
All of the neighborhood houses are big, but this house is the biggest.

このレストランのデザート**は** おいしいですが、レストラン**が** ラーメンでゆうめいです。
This restaurant's dessert is delicious, but they are famous for their ramen.

は vs が

が for Questions:
が is used to mark the subject in どの, どれ, だれ, and どこ question sentences. Refer to Lesson 2 in *Genki* for specifics on how to use these and other こそあど words.

どのリュックサック**が** すずきさんの(リュックサック)ですか。
Which backpack is yours, Suzuki? (The second リュックサック can be omitted.)

どれ**が** すきですか。Which of these do you like?

だれがきますか。Who is coming?

Otherwise, は is used.
これ**は** なんですか。What is this?
ケーキ**は** デザートですか。Is dessert cake?
ヘビ**は** ほにゅうるいですか。Are snakes mammals?

が for Statements of Existence:
Lastly, が is used to state that living things, people, and objects exist. This sentence structure can also mean that you have a pet, sibling, boyfriend, etc. Remember that います (いる) describes living things and あります (ある) describes objects.

クマ**が**います！There's a bear!
いもうと**が**います。I have a younger sister. Literal translation: There is a younger sister.
ペット**が**います。I have a pet. Literal translation: There is a pet.
ここに わたなべさん**が**います！Watanabe is here!
(At a restaurant) ジュースがあります。We serve juice. Literal translation: There is juice.

Vocabulary Mentioned

Vocabulary is listed in the order it appeared for each section.

を

ほん - book
よみます (よむ) - to read
くるま - car
かいます (かう) - to buy
しゃしん - picture
とります (とる) - to take
ねこ - cat
えさ - animal food
やります (やる) - to do, to feed animals
やきゅう - baseball
りょうり - cuisine, cooking (noun)

に

すんでいる (verb*) - to live somewhere
まち - town
ガソリンスタンド - gas station
たくさん - a lot
せんしゅう - last week
きょうと - Kyoto
つくえ - desk
しょうせつ - novel
かきました (かく) - to write
りんご - apple
せんせい - teacher
あたま - head

うえ - up, on top of
コンビニ - convenience store
ひだり - left
かぞく - family
がいこく - foreign country
すんで (すむ) - to live somewhere
いす - chair
すわりました (すわる) - to sit
ごぜん - a.m.
しごと - work
かれ - he
なくなる (なくなりました) - to die

*In the context すんでいる is used in, it's an adjectival verb.

Vocabulary Mentioned

で

こうえん - a park
ジョギング - jogging
かいしゃ - company
はたらきました (はたらく) - to work
レストラン - restaurant
からい - spicy
ラーメン - ramen
たべました (たべる) - to eat
ほうちょう - kitchen knife
ゆび - finger
きりました (きる) - to cut

かなづち - hammer
ほんだな - bookshelf
つくりました (つくる) - to make, to build
バス - bus
だいがく - college, university
いきます (いく) - to go
にほんご - Japanese language
いって (いう) - to say
ください - please

へ

ひこうき - airplane
きた - north
とびました (とぶ) - to fly
ふね - ship
ちゅうごく - China
むかいました (むかう) - to go towards
タイムズスクエア - Times Square
いきました (いく) - to go
たいふう - typhoon
きます (くる) - to come
みんな - everybody or everything

Vocabulary Mentioned

は and が

おかねもち - rich (money)
エアコン - air conditioner
なおしました (なおす) - to fix
さっか - author
とても - very
ゆうめい - famous
アメリカ - America, United States
だいとうりょう - president
ちいさい - small
まち - town
しちょう - mayor
ほら - look
にじ - rainbow
やま - mountain
ゆき - snow
おかし - snack
ひと - person
ぶさほう - rude
いま - now
ユタ - Utah
さむい - cold (weather)
でも - but, however
オーストラリア - Australia

あつい - hot (weather)
いろ - color
きれい - pretty
すべて - all
きんじょ - neighborhood
いえ - house
おおきい - big
レストラン - restaurant
デザート - dessert
おいしい - delicious
こそあど - concept for the group of which, this, and that words.
リュックサック - backpack
すき - to like
だれ - who
きます (くる) - to come
なん/なに - what
ケーキ - cake
ヘビ - snake
ほにゅうるい - mammal
クマ - bear
いもうと - younger sister
ペット - pet
ジュース - juice