**Introduction**

You don’t have to delve too deep into learning HTML and CSS to start seeing the terms “id” and “class” being liberally thrown around. But what are they, and what do they do? Well to answer the first question, they’re both selectors; they perform similar jobs but in slightly different ways. As web developers we may not have hammers and nails to build our sites, but it’s just as important for us to know our way around the items in our toolbox. So what’s a newbie developer to do?

**Let’s start with the basics.**

Baby steps. Here’s what a class looks like in the HTML, and CSS respectively:

Easy so far? Awesome. Let’s compare it with an id, in the HTML and CSS again:

You’ll notice the class is applied to an element with **class=”class-name-here”** and denoted in the associated CSS file with a **#hash**. The id is slightly different - it’s written as **id=”id-name-here”** in the HTML, and marked with a **.fullstop** in the CSS file.

The class selector is preceded by a .full-stop like so, while an id selector is preceded by a #hash. A class can be applied to several elements, whereas an id can be applied to one, and one alone. Also, if there are conflicting styles in a class and an id applied to the same element, the id will override the class.

**That’s great but… when do I use them?**

Okay, we know how to identify a class and an id. But how the heck do you use them in practice?

Well, the id is a bit of a prima donna. It only wants to talk to one element, and one element alone. The class on the other hand is a cheerful, outgoing soul – it can be applied to as many elements as you want!

Since ids are unique and demand to be treated with respect, it’s best to use them for situations where you only have a single instance within your code, like a header or footer. Classes, on the other hand, can be applied to things like photographs or blocks of text.

Even though ids don’t like to mingle with multiple elements, they’ll happily mix with classes so things like this are totally okay:

**In addition**

It’s also important to note that you should avoid drowning your stylesheet in unnecessary classes and ids. Keep it simple. Some developers even follow the school of thought that you [should avoid using ids altogether](https://dev.to/claireparkerjones/reasons-not-to-use-ids-in-css-4ni4), as classes provide so much more flexibility. That said, there are strong counter arguments that clear, unambiguous ids [provide better accessibility](https://www.deque.com/blog/unique-id-attributes-matter/) for people using screenreaders.

**To summarise…**

Classes can be used multiple times within a stylesheet, while ids – which carry more weight – can only be used once. When deciding whether to use a class or id, ask yourself whether it’s likely to be the only instance of that selector within your stylesheet. If it’s a photo or text styling, opt for a class. If it’s a navbar, header or footer, slap it with an id.

Regardless, the best way to get a handle on classes versus ids is to get out there and give it a crack.

Happy coding!