**Introduction**

You don’t have to delve too deep into learning HTML and CSS to pick up the terms “id” and “class”. But what are they, and what do they do? They’re both selectors, so at first glance they seem to perform more or less the same task. So what’s a newbie developer to do? What’s the right tool for the job?

**Let’s start with the basics.**

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?**

Since ids are unique, 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 elements that are used in many different places, like photographs or blocks of text. Multiple classes can be applied to the same element. Similarly, an element can take a class *and* an id.

But if you try to use an id twice? Yeah, that’s going to be chewed up and spat it right back out.

**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!