

■ *Ni* and *E* of Destination

There are instances where *ni* and *e* are both appropriate to indicate the arriving point, as in *hokkaidō ni itta* / *hokkaidō e itta*, ‘went to Hokkaido.’ One may also use either *ni* or *e* with other verbs that express the direction of the subject’s motion, as well as when an object moves in a certain direction, as in *umi {ni/e} dosha o suteru* ‘dump sand and dirt into the ocean’; *Okinawa {ni/e} tegami o okuru* ‘send a letter to Okinawa.’

When the subject or object does not accompany a concrete movement, *ni* is used but not *e*. *E* is not used in sentences where a counterpart or recipient of an action is specified, as in *tomodachi {ni/*e} au* ‘meet with a friend,’ and *haha {ni/*e} yakusoku suru* ‘make a promise to my mother.’ *E* is not appropriate when the sentence describes the state of the object after arriving at the destination, as in *kokuban {ni/?e} kami o hatta* ‘pasted a piece of paper on the blackboard’ and *kaban {ni/?e} hon o irete aru* ‘have put a book in my bag.’

The prominent characteristic of *e* is that it indicates directionality. It is often replaced with *ni*, but in some cases, as in noun modification construction, no replacement is possible. For instance, *Hokkaidō e no ryokō* ‘a trip to Hokkaido,’ is appropriate, but **Hokkaidō ni no ryokō* is not. When *ni* is followed by *to* of quotation, *Ie e to isoida* ‘I hurried home’ is appropriate, but **Ie ni to isoida* is not. Further, one pattern, seen specifically in newspaper headlines and slogans, uses *e* to end a phrase, as in *Shūgiin kaisan e* ‘(the situation has moved toward) the dissolution of the House of Representatives’ and *Gomi wa kuzukago e* ‘all trash: into the waste basket.’ In this pattern *e* is favored over *ni*.

Neither *ni* nor *e* is common with verbs that express the manner and method of motion rather than the movement itself. With such verbs, neither *gakkō ni aruita* nor *gakkō e aruita* sounds appropriate. One has to use *made*, as in *gakkō made aruita* ‘I walked to school.’ One can say, however, *byōin {ni/e} hashitta* ‘I ran to the hospital.’ This is because the emphasis is not on the physical act of running, but the emphasis is on the concept of motion and its urgency. If the concept of motion is prominent, either *ni* or *e* is appropriate.

● References

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