

에게 / 한테

to, for — a person or an animal

The version of 에 reserved for living things. Same meaning either way; 한테 belongs to speech and 에게 to writing.

How it attaches

Register	Form	Example
Speech	한테	친구한테 썼어요
Writing, formal	에게	학생에게 알렸습니다
Honorific	께	선생님께 드렸어요
Source, not target	한테서 / 에서	친구한테서 들었어요
Animals	same as people	고양이한테 밥을 줬어요
Places take	에 instead	회사에 보냈어요 — not 회사한테

Notes

Korean splits its "to" by whether the target is alive. Places, companies, and objects take 에; people and animals take 에게 or 한테. Send a parcel to Seoul and it is 서울에; send it to your sister and it is 동생한테.

The two forms are interchangeable in meaning. 한테 is what you hear in conversation; 에게 is what you read in books, notices, and formal writing. Neither is more polite than the other — politeness toward the recipient is handled by 께, the honorific form, which pairs with verbs like 드리다 and 여쭙보다.

Beyond giving and sending, it marks the person a feeling or an effect lands on: 저한테 중요해요 (it matters to me), 동생한테 잘해 주세요 (be good to my brother).

Examples

- 친구에게 편지를 썼어요.
I wrote a letter to my friend.
- 동생한테 말했어요.
I told my younger sibling.
- 선생님께 여쭙봤어요.
I asked the teacher.
- 고양이한테 밥을 줬어요.
I fed the cat.
- 누구한테 받았어요?
Who did you get it from?
- 회사에 이메일을 보냈어요.
I sent an email to the company.

Compared with

에

The split is grammatical, not stylistic. Living recipients take 에게 or 한테; everything else takes 에. A company is a place, so it takes 에 even though people work there.

친구한테 보냈어요. / 회사에 보냈어요.

께

The honorific counterpart. Use it for teachers, parents, bosses, and elders, and pair it with humble verbs: 드리다 rather than 주다, 여쭙보다 rather than 물어보다.

선생님께 드렸어요. / 친구한테 썼어요.

한테서 / 에서

Adding 서 reverses the direction: the person becomes the source rather than the target. In casual speech 한테 alone often covers both, and context decides.

친구한테 말했어요. (I told my friend) / 친구한테서 들었어요. (I heard it from my friend)

Watch out

✗ 회사한테 서류를 보냈어요.

○ 회사에 서류를 보냈어요.

An organisation counts as a place, not a person. Use 에 for companies, schools, and offices.

✗ 선생님한테 질문을 드렸어요.

○ 선생님께 질문을 드렸어요.

Once you reach for an honorific verb like 드리다, the particle has to match. 께 goes with 드리다, 여쭙보다, and 계시다.

✗ 친구한테 선물을 받았어요.

○ 친구한테서 선물을 받았어요.

With 받다 the friend is the source, so 한테서 is the precise choice. The shorter 한테 is common in casual speech but ambiguous in writing.