Japanese particles in a nutshell

**は** shows the topic of the sentence – what/who you’re are talking about.

わたしはおんがくがすきです。
I like music.

**へ** shows where you are going – it has only this use

こうえんへいきます。
He will go to the park.

**に** shows where you are going (same use as へ).

こうえんにいきます。
She will go to the park.

Can be used to show other things including:

When (a specific time) you are doing something

いちじににほんごをべんきょうします。
I will study Japanese at one o’clock.

Where something is (location)

こうえんはほんやのとなりにあります。
The park is next to the book shop.

**を** shows the object of a sentence (what is having something done to it)

にほんごをべんきょうします。
She will study Japanese.

ほんをよみます。
He reads books.

**の** shows ownership (like ‘s in English)

みちこさんのともだちはからてがすきです。
Michiko’s friend likes karate.

As part of showing ownership, it is used to say where something is.

こうえんはほんやのとなりにあります。
The park is next to the book shop.
で shows how you do something, such as
How you go somewhere
くるまで いきます。
I go by car.

How you write, how you eat and so on
すしを はしで たべます。
I eat sushi with chopsticks.
ひらがなを ふでで かきます。
I write hiragana with a brush.

が
shows existence with います/あります
あそこに ねこが います。
There is a cat over there.
あそこに ほんが あります。
There are books over there.

Goes before potential verbs (can see/can hear etc)
さくらが みえます。
I can see cherry blossoms.

Goes before certain verbs such as good at/bad
at/understand/like/dislike – instead of を. No particular reason for
that – it’s just the way it is.
にほんごが へたです。
I am no good at Japanese.
すしが すきです。
She likes sushi.
にほんごが わかります。
I understand Japanese.