

# Korean Fundamentals #1

## KOREAN ALPHABET

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### Vowels

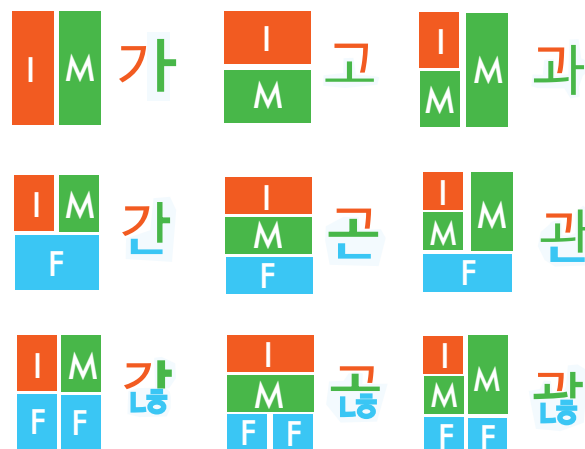
ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ
(a)	(ya)	(eo)	(yeo)	(o)	(yo)
ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ	ㅞ	ㅟ
(u)	(yu)	(eu)	(i)	(ae)	(yae)
ㅚ	ㅜ	ㅘ	ㅙ	ㅝ	ㅞ
(e)	(ye)	(wa)	(wae)	(oe)	(weo)
ㅟ	ㅠ	ㅡ			
(we)	(wi)	(ui)			

### Consonants

ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ
(g,k)	(n)	(d,t)	(l,r)	(m)	(b,p)
ㄱ	ㅇ	ㅅ	ㅈ	ㅋ	ㅌ
(s)	(ng)*	(j)	(ch)	(k)	(t)
ㅍ	ㅎ	ㄲ	ㄸ	ㅃ	ㅆ
(p)	(h)	(kk)	(tt)	(pp)	(ss)
ㅈ					
(ij)					

\*silent in the initial position

- Korean words are made by putting letters into syllable blocks like so:



I = Initial (consonants) M = Medial (vowels) F = Final (consonants)

- The Korean alphabet consists of 24 letters. There are 10 vowels and 14 consonants which are combined to make other letters.

- A lot of Korean words have a basis in hanja although use of hanja is not as frequently used as in the past.

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE

The sentence structure of Korean is different than that of English. Korean follows a SOV (Subject, Object, Verb) structure.

English: S + V + O = I + eat + a + banana.

Korean: S + O + V = I + banana + eat.  
(나는 바나나를 먹어요.)

You can also have sentences which omit the subject or object:

O + V: Now + banana + eat.  
(지금 바나나를 먹어요.)

S + V: I + go.  
(나는 가요.)

Because of this sentence structure, you will not know if the speaker is talking about the past, present, or future until the end of the sentence.

## MORE INFO

A word of caution about romanization. We have included romanization in our guide, but it is strongly recommended that you listen to the actual sounds of the letters as the way a word sounds is completely different than how it might look romanized.

Here are how some of the letters actually sound compared to their romanization:

ㅏ is more like the 'a' in father  
ㅑ is more like the 'ya' in yacht  
ㅓ is more like the 'ou' in young  
ㅕ is more like the 'you' in young  
ㅗ is more like the 'o' in yo yo  
ㅛ is more like the 'yo' in yo yo  
ㅜ is more like the 'oo' in moon  
ㅠ is more like the word 'you'  
ㅡ is more like 'oo' in good  
ㅣ is more like the 'ee' in green  
ㅞ is more like the 'ay' in bay  
ㅟ is more like the word 'yay'  
ㅠ is more like the 'e' in set  
ㅡ is more like the 'ye' in ye  
ㅢ is more like the 'wa' in water  
ㅣ is more like the 'wai' in waiter  
ㅤ is more like the 'wai' in waiter  
ㅥ is more like the 'wo' in won

ㅦ is more like the 'we' in wet  
ㅧ is more like the word 'we'  
ㅨ is more like the 'uey' in muey

Also note that the letters ㅢ and ㅣ are considered to be the same sound recently. In the past, these two letters had a more distinct difference from one another. But as Korean has evolved, these two kind of just blended together.

Also, for the letter ㅤ has long been romanized in a way that can confuse beginners. Although romanized as 'oe' it sounds more like ㅥ.

QUICK PRACTICE!

See if you can read and pronounce these words:

호텔  
hotel

택시  
taxi

팀  
team

카  
car

게임  
game

키스  
kiss

와인  
wine

피자  
pizza

컴퓨터  
computer

칩  
chip

주스  
juice

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## SPECIAL RULES

Some consonants and letter combinations have different pronunciations when they are in the final position. When followed by 'ㅇ' these consonant sounds carry over.

### 1. ㄷ, ㅌ, ㅍ, ㅂ, ㅅ, ㅈ, ㅊ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㄷ	ㄷ	걷다 (to walk) Pronounced as '걸따'	걸으면 (거드면)
ㅌ		끝 (end/finish) Pronounced as '꼇'	끝에 (꼬에)
ㅍ		옷 (clothes) Pronounced as '옇' (ol)	옷이 (오시)
ㅂ		있다 (to exist, to have) Pronounced as '읏따' (ifta)	있어서 (이써서)
ㅅ		찾다 (to find) Pronounced as '챇따' (chatta)	찾아요 (차자요)
ㅈ		꽃 (flower) Pronounced as '꼇' (ggot)	꽃이 (꼬치)
ㅊ		놓다 (to put down) Pronounced as '넇따'	놓으면 (노오면)

### 2. ㄴ, ㄹ, ㄺ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㄴ	ㄴ	문 (door) Pronounced as '문'	문이 (무니)
ㄹ		없다 (to sit) Pronounced as '읏따'	앉아서 (안자서)
ㄺ		편하다 (to be okay) Pronounced as '뽤따'	많은 (마는)

### 3. ㄱ, ㅋ, ㆁ, ㄷ, ㅌ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㄱ	ㄱ	역 (station) Pronounced as '역'	역이 (여기)
ㅋ		부엌 (kitchen) Pronounced as '읏따'	부엌에 (부어게)
ㆁ		밖 (outside) Pronounced as '뵵'	밖에 (바께)
ㄷ		몫 (share) Pronounced as '뵵'	몫은 (목슨)
ㅌ		읽다 (to read) Pronounced as '읏따'	읽으면 (일고면)

### 4. ㄷ, ㅌ, ㅍ, ㅂ, ㅅ, ㅈ, ㅊ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㄷ	ㄷ	열 (10) Pronounced as '읏'	열이 (여리)
ㅌ		넓다 (wide) Pronounced as '넵따'	넓어서 (넵버서)
ㅍ		찰다 (to lick) Pronounced as '읏따'	찰은 (할튼)
ㅂ		끓다 (to boil) Pronounced as '뽏따'	끓으면 (꼬르면)

### 5. ㅁ, ㄴ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㅁ	ㅁ	봄 (spring) Pronounced as '뽏'	봄이 (보미)
ㄴ		살 (life) Pronounced as '얏'	살은 (살른)

### 6. ㅂ, ㅅ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅍ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㅂ	ㅂ	밥 (rice, food) Pronounced as '뵵'	밥은 (바븐)
ㅅ		앞 (front) Pronounced as '얏'	앞에 (야페)
ㅈ		없다 (not exist, not have) Pronounced as '읏따'	없어서 (엄서서)
ㅊ		읽다 (to recite) Pronounced as '읏따'	읽으면 (윽프면)

### 7. ㅇ

CONSONANT	PRONUNCIATION IN FINAL POSITION	EXAMPLES	WHEN FOLLOWED BY THE LETTER 'ㅇ'
ㅇ	ㅇ	방 (room) Pronounced as '뵵'	방이 (방이)

## SPEECH LEVELS

For beginners, there are 3 main speech levels you should be familiar with (there are actually several more, but for the time being, just focus on these three). These are called 존댓말 (1&2) and 반말 (#3).

1. ~ 니다 / (nida) ending = Honorific and most formal

2. (아/어/여) 요 / (a/eo/yeo) yo ending = Less casual than number 1, but still polite and natural. Can be used with most people you meet.

3. 아/어/여 / (a/eo/yeo) ending = The most casual and intimate form. Used with close people and people younger than you or the same age as you. Using 반말 to someone outside of these situations (unless you've gotten permission from them) is considered extremely rude.

To be safe, always start by using #2 polite form (basically add 요 to everything) and after you find out the person's age and only after getting permission should you use 반말.

Examples:

#1 Speech level = 사랑합니다.

#2 Speech level = 사랑해요

#3 Speech level = 사랑해

Asking and giving permission to use lower speech levels:

If you are older:

말 놔주세요?

Can I use 반말 with you?

말 편하게 해도 돼요?

Can I speak comfortably with you?

If you are younger:

말 놓으셔도 돼요

You can talk casually with me.

말 편하게 하셔도 돼요.

You can talk casually with me.

If you are the same age:

우리 말 놓을까요?

Shall we use 반말 with each other?

말 편하게 해도 되죠?

I can use 반말 with you right?

Referring to people

In Korea, you would generally refer to people with a title of some sort. If you are not using the casual speech level, then you would add "씨" to that person's name. For example:

효선씨 은지씨 현수씨

People are also referred to by titles in the workplace, in public, and in general instead of their names. For example:

사장님

(boss)

선생님

(teacher)

언니

(older sister)

오빠

(older brother)

형

(older brother)

언니 is used by women to other women older than them. 누나 is used by men to women older than them. 오빠 is used by women to men older than them. 형 is used by men to other men older than them.

If you are close with the person and you want to get their attention, you would add "아" or "야" to their name. Names that end with a consonant are followed by "아". Names ending without consonants are followed by "야". For example:

효선아 은지야

## BASIC PHRASES

ENGLISH	KOREAN	ROMANIZED
Hello	안녕하세요	an-nyeong-ha-se-yo
Goodbye (If you are leaving and the other person is staying)	안녕히 계세요	an-nyeong-hi gye-se-yo
Goodbye (If you are staying and the other person is leaving)	안녕히 가세요	an-nyeong-hi ga-se-yo
Thank you	감사합니다	kam-sa-ham-ni-da
Nice to meet you	반갑습니다	ban-gap-seum-ni-da
Sorry	죄송합니다	joe-song-ham-ni-da
Sorry	미안합니다	mi-an-ham-ni-da
Excuse me/ Just a moment	잠시만요	jam-si-man-yo
Yes	네/예	ne/ye
No	아니요	a-ni-yo