



Introduction to Korean & Hangeul

Welcome! I'm **Megan**, your Korean language guide.

I've designed this material to help you master Hangeul effortlessly.

I look forward to seeing you become a confident Korean speaker through our lessons!

MEGAN'S EASY KOREAN CLASS

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Where Does Korean Come From?

Language Family

Korean belongs to the **Altaic language family**, sharing roots with Mongolian and Japanese — not Chinese, despite geographic proximity.

The Creator

King Sejong the Great created Hangeul in 1446 during the Joseon Dynasty to make literacy accessible to all Koreans.

Scientific Design

Hangeul is regarded as one of the most **scientific writing systems** ever devised, built on rigorous phonological analysis.

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The Alphabet at a Glance



Hangeul consists of **40 letters** — each representing a distinct sound, much like the English alphabet. But instead of writing letters in a row, Hangeul combines them into **square-shaped syllable blocks**.

☐ Example: **kang** → **강** — three letters combined into one block.

21 Vowels

Including 13 diphthongs

19 Consonants

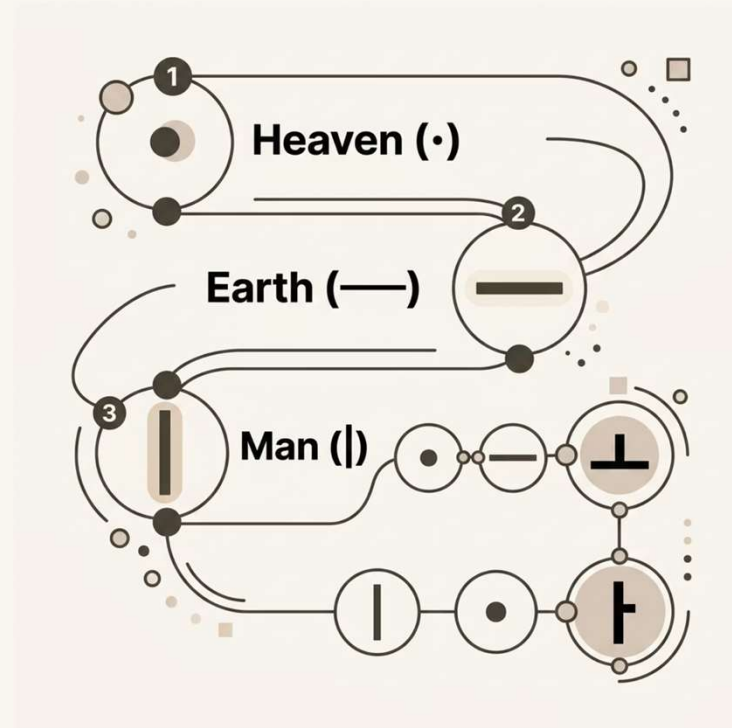
Each mapped to a sound

How Vowels Were Designed

The Trinity of Nature

Every Hangeul vowel is built from three fundamental symbols representing the natural world:

All other vowels are created by combining these three elements.
For example, | + · = ㅏ (a).



· Heaven

A short dot or stroke

— Earth

A horizontal line

| Man

A vertical line

How Consonants Were Designed (1/3) — The 5 Basic Consonants

The five **basic consonants** are the foundation — all others are formed by adding strokes to these foundations.



ㄱ — **Tongue Root**

Shape of the tongue root blocking the throat.
Soft sound like **g** in “go”.



ㄴ — **Tongue Tip**

Shape of the tongue touching the upper gums.
Sound like **n** in “no”.



ㅁ — **Mouth Shape**

Shape of closed lips pressed together.
Sound like **m** in “mom”.



ㅅ — **Incisor**

Shape of a front tooth. Sound like **s** in “sun”.



ㅇ — **Throat**

Round shape of the throat opening. Silent at the start,
ng sound at the end.

➔ Each basic consonant gains strokes to become harder or aspirated sounds — see next card.

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How Consonants Were Designed (2/3) — Derived Consonants



The remaining consonants are formed by adding strokes to the 5 basic shapes. Adding a stroke makes the sound harder or more aspirated.

Aspirated Consonants (거센소리)

Base	Derived	Sound
ㄱ	ㅋ	'k' as in "kite" (aspirated)
ㄷ	ㅌ	't' as in "top" (aspirated)
ㅂ	ㅃ	'p' as in "park" (aspirated)
ㅅ	ㅆ	'h' as in "hat"
ㅈ	ㅉ	'ch' as in "church" (aspirated)

Consonants from Base Shapes



Letter	Sound	Example
ㄷ	'd' as in "dog"	다리 (leg)
ㄹ	'r/l' (flap)	라면 (ramen)
ㅂ	'b' as in "bus"	바나나 (banana)
ㅈ	'j' as in "jump"	자다 (to sleep)

  ㄹ is unique — it sounds like 'r' between vowels and 'l' at the end of a syllable. There is no direct English equivalent!

How Consonants Were Designed (3/3) — All 14 Consonants at a Glance

Here is the complete set of 14 basic Korean consonants with their sounds and example words.

Consonant	Name (Korean)	Sound	Example Word
ㄱ	기역 (Giyeok)	g/k	가방 (bag)
ㄴ	니은 (Nieun)	n	나무 (tree)
ㄷ	디귄 (Digeut)	d/t	다리 (leg/bridge)
ㄹ	리을 (Rieul)	r/l	라면 (ramen)
ㅁ	미음 (Mieum)	m	마음 (heart/mind)
ㅂ	비읍 (Bieup)	b/p	바다 (sea)
ㅅ	시옷 (Siot)	s	사랑 (love)
ㅇ	이응 (Ieung)	silent/ng	아이 (child)
ㅈ	지읒 (Jieut)	j	자다 (to sleep)
ㅊ	치읓 (Chieut)	ch	차 (tea/car)
ㅋ	키읔 (Kieuk)	k (aspirated)	코 (nose)
ㅌ	티읕 (Tieut)	t (aspirated)	토끼 (rabbit)
ㅍ	피읖 (Pieup)	p (aspirated)	피자 (pizza)
ㅎ	히읇 (Hieut)	h	하늘 (sky)

  **Tip:** Many consonants have two sounds — softer at the start of a syllable, harder at the end. This is called ‘final consonant neutralization’ (음절 끝소리 규칙).

The Basic Vowels

Group 1 — Simple Vowels

Letter	Romanization	Sound
ㅏ	a	like "father"
ㅑ	ya	"yah"
ㅓ	eo	like "her" (no r)
ㅕ	yeo	"yuh"
ㅗ	o	like "go"
ㅛ	yo	"yoh"
ㅜ	u	like "moon"
ㅠ	yu	"yoo"
ㅡ	eu	between "oo" and "uh"
ㅣ	i	like "see"

Group 2 — Diphthongs

Letter	Romanization	Sound
ㅝ	ae	like "cat"
ㅞ	yae	"yah" + "eh"
ㅟ	e	like "bed"
ㅠ	ye	"yeh"
ㅡ	wa	"wah"
ㅢ	wae	"wae"
ㅣ	oe	"weh"
ㅤ	wo	"wuh"
ㅥ	we	"weh"
ㅦ	wi	"wee"
ㅧ	ui	"oo-ee"

Vocabulary Practice: Vowels in Action

Try reading these common words — each one uses only the basic vowels you've just learned.



아이 (Ai)

Child — ㅈ + ㅣ



오이 (Oi)

Cucumber — ㅛ + ㅣ



우유 (Uyu)

Milk — ㅍ + ㅠ



여우 (Yeou)

Fox — ㅋ + ㅠ

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Consonants & Vocabulary

The 14 Basic Consonants

ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ ㄲ ㄴ ㄷ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅇ ㅈ ㅊ ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ ㅎ

Each consonant has a distinct sound. Some come in "soft" and "aspirated" pairs (e.g., ㄱ vs. ㅋ).

Words to Know

Word	Meaning
가구 (Gagu)	Furniture
누나 (Nuna)	Older sister (male speaker)
다리 (Dari)	Leg / Bridge
어머니 (Eomeoni)	Mother
사자 (Saja)	Lion
의사 (Uisa)	Doctor

The Final Consonant: Batchim

When a consonant appears at the **bottom** of a syllable block, it's called **Batchim**. Multiple consonants can share the same Batchim sound.

K

[k] Sound

ㄱ · ㅋ · ㆁ 수박 (watermelon), 부엌 (kitchen)

T

[t] Sound

ㄷ · ㅌ · ㅈ · ㅊ · ㅌ · ㅎ · ㅍ 옷 (clothes), 꽃 (flower)

P

[p] Sound

ㅂ · ㅍ 집 (house), 입 (mouth)

O

[ŋ] Sound

ㅇ 가방 (bag), 창문 (window)

☑ Mastering Batchim is the key to natural Korean pronunciation — the same letter sounds different at the start vs. the end of a syllable.

Batchim (2/2) — Double & Compound Final Consonants

Beyond single consonants, Korean has two more types of Batchim: 쌍받침 (doubled consonants) and 겹받침 (compound consonants made of two different letters).

쌍받침 — Doubled Consonants

When the same consonant is written twice, the sound is tense and stronger than the single version.

ㄱ	tense [k]	낚시 (fishing)
ㅅ	tense [t]	있다 (to exist/have), 없다 (to not have)

In practice, ㄱ and ㅅ are the most common doubled Batchim. ㅅ appears very frequently in 있다 and 없다.

겹받침 — Compound Consonants

Two different consonants can sit together at the bottom of a syllable block. Only one is pronounced — the other is carried to the next syllable when followed by a vowel.

ㄱ (ㄱ+ㅅ)	[k]	뉘 (soul/spirit)
ㄴ (ㄴ+ㅈ)	[n]	앉다 (to sit)
ㄹ (ㄹ+ㅎ)	[n]	많다 (many/much)
ㄷ (ㄷ+ㄱ)	[k]	닭 (chicken)
ㅁ (ㅁ+ㅁ)	[m]	삶 (life)
ㅂ (ㅂ+ㅅ)	[l]	밟다 (to step on)
ㅅ (ㅅ+ㅅ)	[l]	외곬 (single-mindedness)
ㅌ (ㅌ+ㅌ)	[l]	핥다 (to lick)
ㅍ (ㅍ+ㅍ)	[p]	읊다 (to recite)
ㅍ (ㅍ+ㅎ)	[l]	끓다 (to boil)
ㅍ (ㅍ+ㅅ)	[p]	없다 (to not have)

□ **Linking Rule (연음):** When a compound Batchim is followed by a vowel (e.g., 없어요), the second consonant moves to the next syllable: 없어요 → [업쎬요]. This is called 연음 (yeon-eum) — sound linking.

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감사합니다!

Thank you