

Basics

G

Level ①

Sound Change Rules

Korean building blocks



When certain hangul are combined, their sounds can change in unexpected ways. In the beginning, knowing these sound changes might not be as beneficial. However, you will eventually learn some words with spellings that might confuse you as to their pronunciation.

You should look at this section from time to time to see if there are any new words you have learned that have a unique sound change. We are only listing some of the common changes.

□ G-1. T-stops

When certain characters are used as a 받침 they are converted to “T” sound. The “T Stop” characters are ㅅ, ㅆ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅌ and ㅍ are also T sounds but since they are normally T sounding they are left out of the examples.

“T” stop examples

것

geot

늦

neut

꽃

ggot

좋

jot

Example with T-stops

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. 이것 (pronounced 이걸) | this one |
| 2. 늦게 (pronounced 늦게) | late |
| 3. 몇 개 (pronounced 몇개) | how many? |
| 4. 좋다 (pronounced 조타) | to be good (see section G-9) |

When any T stop consonant is followed by ㅇ (이응) then the T stop is cancelled.

“T” stop cancels when followed by 이응

것이

geoshi

받아

bada

늦어

neujeo

꽃이

ggochi

□ G-2. ㅅ followed by ㅎ

When ㅅ is followed by a ㅎ in the next hangul character the sound moves into the ㅎ position and is pronounced as ㅍ.

ㅅ is a ㅍ sound when before ㅎ

못하다	→	모타다
못해요	→	모태요

sounds like

□ G-3. “S” to “SH” sound with ㅅ

When ㅅ is combined with ㅣ, ㅛ, ㅜ, ㅠ, ㅡ the “S” changes to an “SH” sound. The sound REMAINS as “S” when combined with ㅓ, ㅕ, ㅗ, ㅛ, ㅜ, ㅠ, ㅡ, ㅑ, ㅓ, ㅕ, ㅗ, ㅛ, ㅜ, ㅠ, ㅡ.

“SH” sounds for ㅅ

시	쇼	셔	샤	슈
shi	sho	sheo	sha	shu

“S” sounds for ㅅ

사	소	서	스	수
sa	so	seo	seu	su

Example of S and SH sound for ㅅ

- | | | |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. 소시지 | sausi | sausage |
| 2. 셔츠 | sheot | shirt |
| 3. 쇼핑 | shopping | shopping |
| 4. 샴푸 | shampoo | shampoo |
| 5. 슈퍼마켓 | super market | super market |
| 6. 사서 | librarian | librarian |

□ **G-4. “L” and “R” sound for ㄹ (리을)**

When there are two ㄹ back to back the sound is always “L”. When ㄹ is at the end of a word it’s always an “L” sound. When ㄹ is at the beginning of a word it’s an “R” sound.

2 ㄹ in a row is “L” sound

빨라 멜론 몰라
ppalla mellon molla

Last ㄹ in a word is “L”

한글 과일 이발
hangeul gwail ibal

□ **G-5. ㄹ(리을) and ㄴ (니은) combinations**

When a ㄹ is followed by a ㄴ OR the ㄴ is followed by ㄹ the combined sound changes to a double “L” sound.

ㄹ followed by ㄴ becomes “LL”

설날 줄넘기
seollal chulleomgi

ㄴ followed by ㄹ becomes “LL”

신라 관리
shilla gwalli

□ G-6. Silent 겹받침 (double consonant)

As discussed in a prior lesson, sometimes one of the double consonants in a double consonant is silent.

Some double 받침 have silent parts

삼	→	삼
	sounds like	
싫어	→	시러

The double consonants you might see are ㄹㄹ, ㄹㅁ, ㄹㅂ, ㄹㅎ, and ㅃㅅ.

□ G-7. Random CH sound when not expected

When ㄷ is followed by ㅈ the resulting sound is “CH”.

Similarly when ㅌ is followed by ㅈ the ㅌ changes to a “CH” sound.

Example CH sounds

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| 1. 끝이 (pronounced 꼬치) | tip, end |
| 2. 같이 (pronounced 가치) | together |
| 3. 닫히다 (pronounced 다치다) | to shut |

□ G-8. The various sounds for 하다

After lesson 6 you will learn about 하다 verbs, and this sound change will be important then. 하다 tends to blend into the hangul character before it.

1. Soft 하다

After you begin learning the 하다 verbs you might feel that it's RARE to hear 하다 actually as HADA. It often sounds like 아다 instead of 하다, or the H sound is weak.

Examples

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. 공부하다 (sounds like 공부아다) | to study |
| 2. 말하다 (sounds like 마라다) | to tell, to talk |
| 3. 단순하다 (pronounced 단수나다) | to be simple |

2. Harder sound before 하다

When consonants like ㄱ, ㅂ are followed by 하다 they blend into a harder sound. See section G-9 also.

Examples

- 1. 대답하다 (sounds like 대다**파**다) to reply, to answer
- 2. 착하다 (sounds like 차**카**다) to be kind

! 특별 정보 Special Information !

SUMMARY: Learning VS actual speaking is different.

When you are learning Korean, and you have a friend or teacher helping you they might actually say 하다 as “HADA” because they are saying it slow.

The 하다 sound change is actually common with other words that start with ㅎ.

Examples

- 1. 천천히 (sounds like 천천**이**) slowly
- 2. 안녕하세요 (sounds like 안녕**아**세요) hello

□ G-9. Shift to hard sound after and before ㅎ

When ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ, or ㅈ are before or after ㅎ their sound shifts to their harder sound counterparts ㅋ, ㅌ, ㅍ, and ㅊ.

Harder sound after ㅎ		
written as		sounds like
싫다	→	싣타
종지	→	조치
그렇게	→	그러케

Harder sound prior to ㅎ	
written as	sounds like
축하	→ 추카
대답해	→ 대다패