

KOREAN MADE SIMPLE

GO! Billy
Korean



Billy Go

A beginner's guide to learning the Korean language



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to you, the learner. If it weren't for people like you who are interested in learning the Korean language, this book would not exist. Thank you for being interested in Korean, and for your support in purchasing this book. My only hope is that this book will serve as a strong, first step toward your personal language learning goals – whatever those goals may be. Good luck in your studies.

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Preface

So you've decided to learn Korean! I congratulate you on your decision, and welcome you on your new journey. As for me, I first learned Korean while living in Korea in 2005. Upon returning home, I chose to major in Korean at my university in 2008, and it's been nonstop fun ever since. I'm happy with my decision to pursue Korean education as a career, and hope to be able to help many others see their Korean abilities improve as we study this wonderful language together here in this book.



What to Expect

This book was designed with you, the learner, in mind. As such, I'm assuming that you have never studied Korean before, and will begin teaching from the very basic of basics, working our way up from there.

First time language learners, Korean beginners, and curious minds of all ages – yes, even those of you who may think "I'm too old to learn a language" – were in my thoughts while writing this book. This book was designed specifically for you.

If you've already studied some Korean before, that's great! Don't worry. I have you in mind as well. In addition to covering the basics, I always make sure to add in a little more in each chapter. Through my personal and academic studies of the Korean language, I'm finding the majority of resources out there for teaching Korean often fail to present concepts in their correct forms – to put it simply, I find lots of mistakes in Korean being taught in other textbooks and on web sites. As such, it's likely that you'll learn something new through this book, even if you've already studied Korean

before up to any level.

Concepts are laid out in their simplest way possible at first, for the beginner. "Advanced Notes" sprinkled throughout each chapter add information that beginning Korean courses might not teach at first, but are still important. Sometimes these will even contain advanced-level material if I feel that it's something that even beginners should know. "Culture Notes" will deepen your understanding of the Korean language because you can't speak Korean well without knowing a thing or two about Korean culture. I didn't even know where Korea was on a map before I started studying the language (Note to self: North and South Korea are very different!).

Do not expect to be speaking fluent Korean by the end of this book. There is simply too much that needs to be covered before you will be able to converse in Korean without any difficulties. However, I promise that if you follow this book well and practice what you learn, you will be able to gain quite an extensive introductory knowledge of the Korean language through this book. And, you will be able to fill in the gaps that most Korean learners face later on in their studies.

And I'll be there the whole way, holding your hand through each lesson – figuratively of course. I'm not really going to hold your hand the whole time (I'm sorry, but that's just creepy).

How to Use This Book

This book builds upon itself with each chapter. I recommend that you take your time going through each lesson, in order. Don't move on to the next section until you feel comfortable with the last one. Each lesson builds upon knowledge learned from the previous one, so skipping a lesson could lead to problems understanding concepts in later lessons; this negative result would obviously compound the more lessons you skip. In short, do all of the lessons and all of the exercises in order, or at least do all of the lessons if you're in a rush and feel confident enough to skip the Practice sections.

If this is your first time learning Korean, I recommend reading each "Culture Notes" section, but skipping the "Advanced Notes" sections, as these are not designed for first time learners. If this isn't your first time studying Korean, I recommend reading the additional "Advanced Notes" in each chapter. In addition, if you've already read this book once before, I would also recommend reading the "Advanced Notes" sections on your second time through.

As you complete each chapter, refer frequently to the vocabulary lists in the back of

the chapter, or the Glossary in the back of this book as necessary. If you are having trouble understanding a sentence, or creating a sentence for the Practice sections, it might only be due to not knowing the appropriate vocabulary word.

Take notes along the way as you complete each chapter. Practice reading, writing, and speaking as much as possible. If you have a friend who can speak Korean, practice speaking and listening frequently.

In addition, if you notice a grammar form you are not familiar with, I would recommend proceeding through the book more slowly. This book builds upon itself, so if you have missed something, and if it does not appear in the chapter you are currently reading, it may have been skipped from a previous chapter. There is no need to rush through the basics of the Korean language. It will take time to become familiar with using the Korean alphabet, and to become used to hearing the sounds of the language – this is normal. Once you have learned the basics, it will become much easier, and faster, to move forward and acquire new concepts.

How to Study Korean

I'm not the authority on how your brain will learn this language the best, but I do have a few suggestions. Try some of them, and use what works for you.

1. Quiz yourself frequently on words you are learning, or have somebody else quiz you.
2. Force yourself to create sentences using the words and grammar forms that you are learning.
3. If you are fortunate enough to live in an area with many Koreans (such as in Korea or a major city), make friends and practice speaking the language as much as possible.
4. Keep a regular study schedule. Even if you only have 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, stick to it. 30 minutes a day for 5 days is better than studying 150 minutes at once. Shorter, frequent study is also easier to manage if you have a busy schedule.
5. Write vocabulary words you learn on sticky notes, and place them over things and places that they correspond to. For example, you can write the Korean word for "pencil" on your favorite pencil, or the word for "friend" on your best friend's forehead.
6. Grammar is more important than vocabulary. A beginner with a strong

understanding of basic Korean grammar will sound worlds better than a walking dictionary that can't construct a coherent sentence.

7. Brush Up Your English Grammar.

"This is a Korean book! Why do I have to learn English grammar?" Many concepts in Korean are much easier to explain and understand if you have a basic grasp of English grammar. Could you learn that the Korean word 사과 meant "apple" in English, without knowing the English word "apple" beforehand? As such, you'll need to be familiar with words such as verb, adjective, noun, and others, in order to better learn the Korean language. Here are a few English concepts I use in this book which you should be at least familiar with before starting:

Subject / Object / Noun / Adjective / Adverb / Verb

I'll also be covering necessary grammar words as they come up throughout the book but knowing what they are in advance will help make concepts easier to digest once we get there.

Welcome to Korean and Korea



To everyone who's learning for their first time, welcome! To everyone else, welcome back! Before we dive into the language, it's important to first know a few things about the country that speaks it.

Korea is located to the west of Japan, and it shares a border with the eastern part of China.

Originally, Korea was one country, but the end of the Korean War in 1953 resulted in the two sides separating into North Korea and South Korea. "Why?" To put it simply, North Korea and South Korea had some serious disagreements that led to the Korean War starting in the first place.

Both North Koreans and South Koreans speak the same Korean language, but decades of being divided from each other caused separate dialects to emerge, and the way each country spoke the same language began to become more different. For comparison, you can think of North Korean speech to South Korean speech as being what British English is to American English; people from both countries can understand each other fine, but have their own distinct differences in pronunciation, and vocabulary.

For this book (and like most other Korean language books), we will be learning the Korean language as spoken in South Korea. But before we dive into Korean, let's start by learning a little bit about the country of South Korea.

•Full name: **대한민국** (shortened to **한국**)

•Population: 50 million

•Current capital: Seoul

•Language: Korean – of course!

Korea shares a lot of its history with its neighbor, China. A large portion of the Korean vocabulary originally came from Chinese as well, although the sounds of these words were changed as they were brought into Korea. Still, although Korea has adopted much of its vocabulary from Chinese, and some of its grammar from Japanese, it is unrelated to either languages; Korean is completely unique from any other language. This makes it even more interesting.

We'll be learning to speak Korean through this book, as well as read and write it. If you can't yet read or write Korean, no worries! We'll be covering everything about the written language in the next few sections.

Approximately 80 million people speak Korean natively worldwide. Including non-

native speakers, and people currently learning to speak Korean (such as yourself), the number is much larger.

Korean Sentence Structure

The Korean language works differently from other languages. For comparison, let's take a look at a simple sentence in English:

"I kicked the ball."

The English language uses a S.V.O. sentence structure – Subject, Verb, and Object. This means that the subject comes first ("I"), followed by the verb ("kicked"), and then the object ("the ball").

However, the Korean language uses a S.O.V. sentence structure – Subject, Object, and Verb.

Here's the same sentence written again, but using Korean sentence structure:

"I ball kicked."
저는 공을 꺾습니다.

You'll see in future lessons how sentence structure works, and it's not that complicated once you've practiced with it. As I mentioned, there are over 80 million people speaking Korean currently, and I'm sure that you can learn it as well.

Why Korean?

But why are you learning Korean?

- Business?
- Travel?
- Making friends?
- Dating?
- For fun?
- "Because I can, that's why."

All of these are great reasons to study Korean. No matter your reason, you've truly chosen a fun, interesting, and useful language. I hope that this book will help you reach your own goals for learning Korean.

If this is your first time learning Korean and you have never heard of the ㄴ니다 form before, you can feel free to skip this section and begin learning the Korean alphabet. I would like to discuss my usage of the ㄴ니다 form in this book.

This book has been designed to help people to learn the Korean language clearly and correctly, including proper grammar rules, and is not a phrase book. As such, I've chosen to introduce the ㄴ니다 form (a very polite way of speaking) first and foremost in this book, and only introduce the ㅁ form (used for the majority of informal speaking) toward the end, beginning with Chapter 19.

As a disclaimer, the ㄴ니다 form is not commonly used in real, regular Korean conversations. This is because it is a formal form, and is used most often for formal and business situations. I also discuss this in detail, including when to use the ㄴ니다 form, in Chapter 19. In addition, the ㄴ니다 form can sound awkward when used to friends or to people who are younger than the speaker. Regardless, I felt it was best to introduce it first for several reasons.

However, the ㄴ니다 form has several advantages over the ㅁ form for first time students of the Korean language.

1. It's simpler to learn, helping to ease the learner into Korean, to save mental resources for focusing on adjusting to the Korean alphabet and grammar.
2. It's better to be too polite than to be rude.
3. Students who have just begun studying Korean will likely not be able to hold a full conversation, so knowing the ㅁ form is unnecessary for introductory concepts.

While some students of Korean who have already passed the basics may see the ㄴ니다 form as useless, or counterproductive to learning Korean, I strongly believe that it is not, and decided to structure the book in this way after intensely comparing the options.

While studying the ㅁ form first can help to adjust the learner to conjugating and using it, it has its own share of problems that I feel outweighs its benefits – at least in the beginning.

1. It requires knowledge of several rules in order to conjugate. This can be

intimidating to first time learners.

2. Although it is not rude in itself, when used in situations where formality is required the ㄹ form can sound rude.

3. It should not be used to ask questions to people who are older. As such, the learner must also learn honorific grammar and vocabulary in order to properly speak using the ㄹ form.

Nevertheless, I understand the importance of knowing the ㄹ form in order to hold a real conversation in Korean. Although it is introduced late (Chapter 19), I have included every conversation from every chapter re-written using the ㄹ form in the back of this book, for practice and also for study.

My ultimate goal is for this book to give you a comprehensive introduction to the Korean language – consider it a solid stone step up a tall mountain. I hope that you can trust my methods long enough to be able to take over on your own.

Good luck in your language learning, and feel free to contact me with any questions or comments at any time (just please don't call me late at night when I'm sleeping).

Introduction to Hangeul

What is Hangeul?

"Hangeul" is the name of the writing system used all throughout Korea, both in South Korea and in North Korea. Specifically, it's an alphabet, meaning that it's made up of consonants and vowels, just like the English language.

Before the 1500s in Korea, there was no way of writing the Korean language. Instead, wealthy and educated Koreans would simply learn Chinese if they wanted to read and write. Because the Chinese language could only be studied by those with money and prestige, the majority of Korea was unfortunately illiterate. But all of this changed with the creation of the Korean alphabet, known as Hangeul.

Hangeul was introduced to Korea in 1446 by King Sejong (세종), who also happens to be one of the most famous people in all of Korean history. This event was extremely important in the development of the Korean language, and allowed even the poorest Korean to read and write due to Hangeul's simplicity.



Do I Need to Learn Hangeul?

The short answer is "yes." The long answer is also "yes." The only truly reliable way of writing and reading the Korean language is through Hangeul. Although there are ways of using the English alphabet to spell Korean words, none of these are perfect, and all have their flaws – Hangeul is the only true way of learning to correctly read and write Korean.

There are several systems available for writing the Korean language with the English alphabet, and yet none of them can correctly capture the sound, spelling, and

meaning of the original word written at the same time.

For example, take the Korean word 독립문 ("Independence Gate"). Depending on which system you are using, it could be written as Dongnimmun, Toklipmun, or even Dog-Rib-Moon, among several others. While one system might preserve the actual sound of the word (Dongnimmun), it loses the original spelling in the process. A different system may preserve the original spelling (Toklipmun), but loses the actual sound. And while another system may preserve the original spelling and the original sound (Dog-Rib-Moon), it looks completely silly. In short, there is no substitute for learning to read and write Hangul.

Hangul is an Alphabet

Fortunately for you, Hangul is simple. As I mentioned, it's an alphabet. As such, you only need to learn the letters in order to be able to construct every sound possible in the Korean language.

Although Hangul might look like complex symbols, such as Chinese, each syllable is composed of simple consonants and vowels. There are 10 unique vowels and 14 basic consonants in Hangul, making a total of 24 letters (contrast this with English which has 26 letters). Just like in English, consonants combine with vowels to form syllables, and words.

Syllables are written one letter at a time, and letters are written in order from left to right, and top to bottom.

Each syllable is written as a single block. For example, the word 한글 ("Hangul") is made up of two separate blocks, which are actually separate syllables – 한 and 꺠. The first syllable, 한, is made of three letters (ㅎ, ㅏ, and ㄴ). The second syllable, 꺠, is also made of three letters (ㄱ, ㅡ, and ㅁ). Although we haven't learned what these letters mean yet, for now take note that letters – vowels and consonants – combine to form blocks of syllables. These syllables then combine to form words and sentences.

I'll be with you through our entire process of learning Hangul and the Korean language in this book. Take your time with these lessons, and learn each new letter as well as you can. Having a solid grasp of Hangul will greatly help you later on with the lessons, as well as with your own personal goals of mastering the Korean language.

Basic Consonants and Vowels

Before we start covering all of the different letters, let's first take a look at the basic structure of Hangul. To begin, we'll take a look at three consonants and one vowel. We'll learn how to combine consonants with vowels to create our first syllables.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is similar to a "k" or "g." However, it is not strong like a "k" in "kite," nor is it strong like a "g" in "great." It's a bit softer, and somewhere between "k" and a "g." To keep things simple, let's call it a "g."

Number of Strokes: 1

Stroke Order: Starting from the top left, draw a single line to the right, and without lifting your writing instrument, curve down.

What is Stroke Order?

Before going any further, let's take a moment to talk about stroke order. Every letter in Korean has a certain order in which it must be drawn. Think of stroke order like following a recipe; although you know what the end result should be, you have to make sure you get there by adding ingredients in the right order. Having proper stroke order is essential to producing good, legible Korean letters. Incorrect stroke order can easily result in the letter looking like something else – take my word on this for now.

It is much easier to learn proper stroke order in the beginning than to try to fix it later. Take care to practice proper stroke order from the beginning and you will thank me later.

Since it's difficult to compare the Korean alphabet with English sounds (such as in the above letter ㄱ), all sounds in this book will be compared to American English as it is the most widely taught and used version of English internationally.



Type: Vowel

Pronunciation: This is similar to an "a," as in the word "law" or "car." You can also think of it as the "ah" sound you might say when you've realized something.

Number of Strokes: 2

Stroke Order: Starting from the top, draw a single line down. Then draw a second, shorter line beginning from the middle of the first, going to the right.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is similar to an "n," such as in the word "now."

Number of Strokes: 1

Stroke Order: Starting from the top, draw a line down, and without lifting your writing instrument, continue drawing to the right.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is similar to a "t" or "d." However, it is not strong like a "t" in "ten," nor is it strong like a "d" in "dog." It's a bit softer, and somewhere between a "t" and a "d." To keep things simple, let's call it a "d."

Number of Strokes: 2

Stroke Order: Starting from the top left, draw a single line to the right. Start a second line from the left end of the first line, moving down then right, just like you did earlier when drawing ㄥ.

Making Syllables

Now that we've got a few consonants and a vowel to work with, let's try making some syllables. Remember that a syllable, just like in English, consists of at least one vowel and at least one consonant.

Try to see what the following syllables will sound like, before reading their explanations. You can do this by covering the right side of the page as you complete each one.

ㄱ + ㅏ = ?

Answer: "ga"

ㄴ + ㅏ = ?

Answer: "na"

ㄷ + ㅏ = ?

Answer: "da"

Remember that ㄱ is not a strong "k" or a strong "g," and ㄷ is not a strong "t" or a strong "d." These sounds are softer, and somewhere between these two sounds.

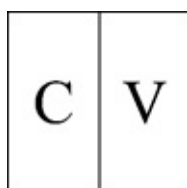
As you can already see, many sounds in Korean do not have exact English equivalents. This is why it's best to learn Korean through Hangul, instead of through writing the language with English or another writing system. Being able to pronounce Hangul correctly will greatly improve your overall Korean pronunciation.

But syllables in Hangul aren't written like "ㄱ + ㅏ," so we need to learn the proper way to write them. Remember that Hangul uses blocks of syllables to create words. These blocks are formed in a few ways. Let's take a look at what the above examples would look like written in Hangul as real syllable blocks.

가 / 나 / 다

Each of these syllable blocks contains at least one consonant and at least one vowel. Since these are our first basic syllables, they each contain only one consonant and one vowel. Later on we'll learn how to make more complex syllables using more letters.

Notice also how each of these is written – the consonant is on the left, and the vowel is on the right. This is due to the vowel that we used. The vowel that is used in a consonant will determine the way that a syllable block is written. For vertical vowels, such as ㅏ in the above examples, here's the block form used to write them.



For block forms represented in this book, "C" represents a consonant and "V" represents a vowel.

Let's re-write our first example (ㄱ + ㅏ) as a real syllable using the above block form



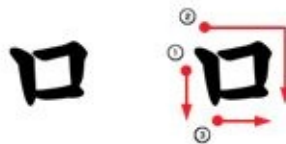
This is what we get, but it looks a bit awkward, kind of like a robot wrote it. To make it more natural, the ㄱ is stretched out longer to make it match closer to the height of the ㅏ. Here's how it will be written:



And just as English will have different ways of writing the alphabet (different styles or fonts), Korean will too. This is another reason why it's important to learn the right stroke order. As long as you know the correct stroke order for a letter, you will be able to read Hangul written in any possible style.

Before moving on, practice writing a few syllables on your own.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



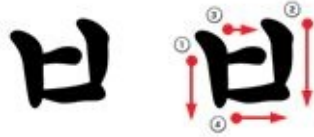
Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is pronounced like an "m," as in the word "mother."

Number of Strokes: 3

Stroke Order: Starting from the top left, draw a single line down. Start a second line from the top of the first line, going to the right and then downward like drawing a ㄇ. Start the third line from the bottom of the first line, going to the right and connecting with the second line.

Be especially careful with the stroke order on ㄇ, as drawing it the wrong order (or just drawing a square) can easily cause it to appear as a different letter (ㄅ, which we will learn soon).



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is similar to a "p" or "b." However, it is not strong like a "p" in "park," nor is it strong like a "b" in "bat." It's a bit softer, and somewhere between a "p" and a "b." To keep things simple, let's call it a "b."

Number of Strokes: 4

Stroke Order: Starting from the top left, draw a single line down. Start a second line parallel to the first, from the top, also going down. Start a third line from the middle of the first line, going to the right and connecting to the middle of the second line. Start a fourth line from the bottom of the first line, going to the right and connecting to the bottom of the second line.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is pronounced like "s," such as in the word "snake."

Number of Strokes: 2

Stroke Order: Starting from the top, draw a slightly curved line down sideways and to the left. Start a second line, also slightly curved, from the top of the first line, going sideways and to the right. Both lines should curve inward.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is similar to a "ch" or "j." However, it is not strong like a "ch" in "cherry," nor is it strong like a "j" in "job." It's a bit softer, and somewhere between "ch" and a "j." To keep things simple, let's call it a "j."

Number of Strokes: 3

Stroke Order: Starting from the top left, draw a line to the right. Start a second line from the middle of the first line, going down and to the left. Start a third line again from the middle of the first line, going down and to the right. You can think of this letter as a flat line sitting on top of a ㅈ. Just like ㅈ, make sure to curve the two bottom lines inward slightly.

Advanced Notes:



You might also see this letter written in the above way; either way is fine. To draw it this way, start the first stroke the same way, but begin the second line from the right end of the first line. The third stroke will then instead begin from the middle of the second stroke. Here, the second stroke will curve, just like for ㅈ, but the third stroke will curve in the opposite direction. Feel free to write this letter either way you'd prefer.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is pronounced similar to an "h," as in the word "hall."

Number of Strokes: 3

Stroke Order: Starting from the top, draw a short line downward. Start the second stroke on the left, going to the right, and connecting with the first stroke in the middle. The third stroke is simply a circle, but you should start drawing it from the very top, going counterclockwise.

This consonant might remind you of a stick figure's head wearing a pointed hat.

Advanced Notes:



You might also see this letter written in the above way; either way is fine. To draw it this way, start the first stroke by going parallel to the second stroke, instead of perpendicular to it. The rest is completed the same way.



Type: Vowel

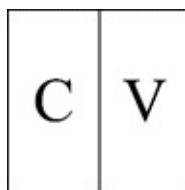
Pronunciation: This is pronounced like an "o," as in the word "old."

Number of Strokes: 2

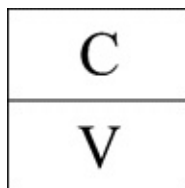
Stroke Order: Starting from the top, draw a short line downward. Start the second stroke on the left, going to the right, and connecting with the first stroke in the middle. It will look like the top part of **ㅜ**, only larger.

When you say this vowel, your lips will round into an "o" shape.

Now that we've introduced this new vowel (ㅜ), there's an additional block form we can use to create syllables with. Previously, we learned the following method for vertical vowels, such as **ㅏ**.



But now we can also make syllables using horizontal vowels, such as **ㅜ**. Here's what that block form would look like:



Using this format, let's take the letters **ㅁ** ("m") and **ㅜ** ("o") and combine them

together. This would then be pronounced as "mo."



This can then be written on its own to look like:

모

Reading Practice

Using every letter that we've covered so far (ㄱ, ㅋ, ㆁ, ㄷ, ㅌ, ㅁ, ㅂ, ㅃ, ㅅ, ㅆ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅊ, ㅌ), let's make some new syllables. Try to read them on your own before looking at the explanations.

ㄱ + ㅜ = ㄱㅜ

Answer: "go"

ㄱ + ㅓ = ㄱㅓ

Answer: "ga"

ㄴ + ㅜ = ㄴㅜ

Answer: "no"

ㄴ + ㅓ = ㄴㅓ

Answer: "na"

ㄷ + ㅜ = ㄷㅜ

Answer: "do"

ㄷ + ㅓ = ㄷㅓ

Answer: "da"

ㅁ + ㅜ = ㅁㅜ

Answer: "mo"

ㅁ + ㅓ = ㅁㅓ

Answer: "ma"

ㅂ + ㅜ = ㅂㅜ

Answer: "bo"

ㅂ + ㅓ = ㅂㅓ

Answer: "ba"

ㅃ + ㅜ = ㅃㅜ

Answer: "jo"

Answer: "ja"

Answer: "so"

Answer: "sa"

Answer: "ho"

Answer: "ha"

ㅈ + ㅏ = ㅊ

ㅈ + ㅓ = ㅑ

ㅈ + ㅗ = ㅆ

ㅎ + ㅓ = ㅖ

ㅎ + ㅗ = ㅎ

Above is every possible combination of two-letter syllables that we can make using only the letters that what we've learned so far.

Practice writing your own syllables below, using what we've learned so far.

More Consonants

Believe it or not, we've almost finished learning all of the basic consonants in Hanguul. There are just two more, which we'll cover now.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is pronounced like an "l" sound, such as in the word "long." However, when you say ㄹ, position your tongue as if you were saying a "d" (such as in "dog") – then say "l" instead. It will come out sounding like a cross between an "l"

and an "r," and this is exactly what you will want it to sound like.

Number of Strokes: 3

Stroke Order: Starting from the top left, draw a single line to the right, and without lifting your writing instrument, curve down – just like 꺾. Start the second line, a single straight line going from left to right and connecting at the end of the first line. The third line will start from the left side of the second line, going downward, then to the right – just like when drawing ㄴ.

Although it may be tempting, do not write this letter with one stroke. It's essential to maintain the correct stroke order. Even if the end result might appear similar to you, it will not look correct to the trained eye of a native Korean speaker.



Type: Consonant

Pronunciation: This is pronounced "ng," such as in the word "song" or "hang," but only when ㅇ is used at the end of a syllable.

Number of Strokes: 1

Stroke Order: Start from the top, and draw a circle going counterclockwise (just like you did for ㅎ).

Although ㅇ is pronounced "ng" at the end of a syllable, when it's used at the beginning of a syllable it has no sound. We'll go over how to use this letter in detail soon.

Vowel Sounds

So far we've learned how to combine consonants with vowels to form syllable blocks, but what if we want to have a vowel sound by itself? What if we only want to say the sound that ㅏ makes?

We learned that a syllable must have at least one consonant and one vowel. In this case, we can use ㅇ as the consonant, which has no sound when used at the beginning of a syllable (its "ng" sound only applies when ㅇ appears at the end of a syllable, which we will cover soon).

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