

KR

WRITING SYSTEM COURSE

Korean Alphabet 1

Learn to read Hangul: the 24 basic letters, syllable blocks and final consonants, with every claim labelled.

10 Chapters

Philip Osztromok

Generated with Claude

Contents

Chapter 1	How Hangul Works	2
Chapter 2	Vowels Down and Across	7
Chapter 3	First Consonants	11
Chapter 4	More Consonants	15
Chapter 5	Last Plain Consonants	19
Chapter 6	Y-Vowels 1	23
Chapter 7	Y-Vowels 2	28
Chapter 8	The Aspirates	33
Chapter 9	Final Consonants	38
Chapter 10	Reading Practice	43

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · How Hangul Works

한글 — Meet Hangul

Korean is written in Hangul (한글), and it is one of the easiest writing systems to learn: a true alphabet of just 24 basic letters, and every letter has a shape you can explain. By the end of this chapter you will know how the letters fit together into blocks, and you will have learned your first three letters, ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ. Romanisation is shown for everything, so you are never guessing.

A Script Made on Purpose

Most writing systems grew over centuries. Hangul was designed.

- **Who:** it was created under King Sejong the Great (who reigned from 1418 to 1450), and he was probably heavily involved personally.
- **When:** it was introduced to the court in the twelfth month of 1443 and officially promulgated in the ninth month of 1446, in a text called the *Hunminjeongeum*, which was also the script's original name. The page's translation of that name is "Correct Sounds for the Instruction of the People".
- **Why:** Sejong said that Korean sounds differ from Chinese, and the Chinese characters did not fit them, so many people could not write what they wanted to say. He designed letters so that everyone could "practice at their ease" and use them daily.
- **The name:** "Hangul" is the international spelling (in South Korea's official romanisation, "Hangeul"). It means "script of Han", where Han is one of the names of Korea. North Korea calls it Chosŏn'gŭl.

24 Basic Letters

*There are **24 basic letters** (called jamo): **14 consonants and 10 vowels**. Counting the doubled consonants, the compound vowels and the consonant combinations that come later, there are 51 in all. This course teaches the 24 basic letters.*

- **The consonants are drawn from the mouth.** Five basic consonants are based on speech organs: ㄱ (the tongue root blocking the upper palate), ㅋ (the tongue touching the upper palate), ㆁ (the mouth), ㆁ (a tooth) and ㅇ (the throat). The other consonants are built from these.
- **The vowels are drawn from philosophy.** The vowel shapes are based on ideas from Chinese philosophy: they are built from a dot, a horizontal line (ㅡ) and a vertical line (ㅣ), and the vertical line ㅣ stands for the human being. The other vowels combine these shapes.

Letters Build Blocks

*In English letters go in a line. In Hangul letters are stacked into a **syllable block**, one block per syllable, and the blocks are written in a line.*

- Every block has an **initial consonant**, a **vowel** and sometimes a **final consonant**.
- A vowel with a long **vertical** stroke (like ㅣ and ㅑ) goes to the **right** of the first consonant. A vowel with a long **horizontal** stroke (like ㅓ, ㅕ and ㅡ) goes **below** it. The next chapter teaches the horizontal vowels.
- Text is now written horizontally, in rows, left to right.
- In theory the system can make 11,172 different blocks. Only about 2,000 are used in Korean, so you will not meet most of them.

The silent ㅇ

*Every block must begin with a consonant shape. When a syllable begins with a vowel sound, Hangul puts a placeholder there: ㅇ. At the start of a block ㅇ is **silent**. So the block ㅇㅏ is just the sound "a": a silent ㅇ on the left with ㅏ on the right.*

Block	Parts	Sound
ㅏ	ㅇ + ㅏ	a
ㅑ	ㅇ + ㅣ	i

The *o* is silent at the start of a block. At the end of a block it has a different sound, "ng", which Chapter 9 explains.

Your First Three Letters — ㅏ | ㅇ

Korean vowels, like Japanese ones, are short and steady. Say each one and keep your mouth still.

ㅏ

a

like the "a" in *father* ("ah")

Memory hook: a standing person with an arm stuck out to the right, pointing at the next letter: "ah, there!"

ㅣ

i

like the "ee" in *see* ("ee")

Memory hook: a single straight line is a person standing upright, and the "i" is the person's thin "l". The vowel was designed as the shape of a human being.

ㅇ

(silent) / ng

silent at the start of a block;
"ng" as in *song* at the end

Memory hook: a round open throat with nothing coming out, which is silence. The letter was designed as the shape of the throat.

Writing a Block

This course does not teach stroke order yet. For now, copy each shape slowly. For a block such as ㅏ, write the circle ㅇ on the left, then the vertical line ㅣ with its short stroke to the right of it. Write each block ten times on paper, saying its sound aloud as you do.

Read It — Your First Words

With just these three letters you can already read real Korean.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	ㅏ	a	(the sound "ah")	one block, silent ㅇ + ㅏ
2	ㅣ	i	tooth	one block, silent ㅇ + ㅣ

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
3	아이	a-i	child	<i>two blocks, "ah-ee"; not the English word "eye"</i>

Watch Out: 아이 Is Two Sounds

The word 아이 is written as two blocks, 아 and 이, so it is read as two separate sounds ("ah" then "ee"), not as the English word "eye".

Not Yet Verified

The facts on Sejong, the dates, the number of letters, the silent ㅇ and the vowel placement come from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary. The meanings "child" for 아이 and "tooth" for 이 come from a web search that returned a learning forum, Wiktionary and a vocabulary site, not a textbook. The page did not give 아 as a word, so the table shows it only as a sound. The "a as in father" and "i as in see" comparisons are my English approximations of the page's /a/ and /i/. The memory hooks are my own. The summary assigned yin/earth, yang/sun and "man" to the three vowel shapes in a way that differed from what I remembered, so I kept only the point that ㅣ stands for the human being; please check the vowel philosophy against a reliable source. I also have not checked the stroke order of any letter.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on the words 아이 and 이 (a learning forum, Wiktionary and a vocabulary site).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. How many basic letters does Hangul have, and how many are consonants and vowels?

▼ Show answer

24 basic letters: 14 consonants and 10 vowels.

2. Read these aloud: 아 · 이 · 아이

▼ Show answer

a · i · a-i ("child")

3. What sound does ㅇ make at the start of a block? And at the end?

▼ Show answer

Silent at the start of a block; "ng" at the end (Chapter 9).

4. Where does ㅣ go in a block: to the right of the consonant, or below it? Why?

▼ Show answer

To the right, because it is a vowel with a long vertical stroke. Vowels with a long horizontal stroke go below.

5. Write in Hangul: a · i · a-i

▼ Show answer

아 · 이 · 아이

Coming Up in Chapter 2

You know the vertical vowels ㅣ and ㅡ. Next come the vowels that sit *below* the consonant: ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ, which gives you the blocks 오, 우 and 으.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 2 · Vowels Down and Across

ㄷ ㅌ ㅡ ㅗ The Vowels That Lie Flat

Chapter 1 gave you ㅏ and ㅓ, the vowels with a long vertical stroke, which go to the right of the consonant. This chapter adds the three vowels with a long horizontal stroke: ㅗ ㅜ ㅡ. They go **below** the consonant.

Right or Below?

The rule for where a vowel goes is simple, and it needs no memorising: look at its longest stroke.

Long stroke	Vowel goes...	Letters you know	Blocks
vertical	to the right	ㅏ	아 이
horizontal —	below	ㅗ ㅜ ㅡ	오 우 으

The rule is from Wikipedia's Hangul page: a vowel with a long horizontal stroke is written below the initial consonant. Later vowels follow the same rule.

Your Next Three Letters ㅡ ㅗ ㅜ

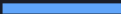
The three vowels sound different, but the first two are easy to mix up on the page, so learn them as a pair.



o



u



eu

like the "o" in *or*, with rounded lips ("oh")

Memory hook: the short stroke points *up*, like a plant sprouting from the ground. Sprouts say "oh!".

like the "oo" in *moon* ("oo")

Memory hook: the short stroke points *down*, like a root growing into the earth. Roots say "oo".

a vowel English lacks: say "oo" but with your lips flat and spread, not rounded

Memory hook: a flat line is a flat mouth. Make your lips as flat as the letter.

Rounded or Flat?

The page's IPA labels give ㅜ as a *rounded* vowel and ㅡ as an *unrounded* one. So the two differ mostly in the lips: round them for ㅜ, flatten them for ㅡ. A learning site gives the same advice for ㅡ: make the lips flat like the character and try to say "oo".

Look-Alike Warnings

- ㅏ and ㅓ are mirror images: the short stroke points up for ㅏ and down for ㅓ.
- ㅡ and ㅣ are the same line turned 90 degrees. ㅡ lies flat and goes below the consonant; ㅣ stands up and goes to the right.
- In the English romanisation, ㅡ is written *eu*, which looks like it should sound like "you". It does not: it is a single short sound.

Read It — Your First Words

The five vowels ㅏ ㅣ ㅏ ㅓ ㅡ with ㅇ give you every block that starts with a vowel sound. Read them all.

BLOCK	ROMANISATION	NOTE
ㅏ	a	ㅇ + ㅏ (<i>right</i>)
ㅣ	i	ㅇ + ㅣ (<i>right</i>)
ㅜ	o	ㅇ + ㅜ (<i>below</i>)

BLOCK	ROMANISATION	NOTE
ㅜ	u	ㅇ + ㅏ (below)
ㅡ	eu	ㅇ + ㅑ (below)

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	아이	a-i	child	from Chapter 1
2	이	i	tooth	from Chapter 1
3	오이	o-i	cucumber	two blocks; see the Not Yet Verified box
4	아우	a-u	younger sibling	two blocks; see the Not Yet Verified box

Not Yet Verified

The pronunciations (/o/, /u/, /w/) and the placement rule come from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary. The page gives no example blocks for 오, 우 and ㅡ, and says nothing on whether ㅡ has an English equivalent, so my English comparisons ("or", "moon", "oo with flat lips") are my own approximations, partly guided by a Korean-class lesson found in a web search. That search did not find the words 오이 or 아우; their meanings "cucumber" and "younger sibling" are from my own knowledge, and I have not checked them against a dictionary. The memory hooks are mine. I have not checked stroke order for any letter.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on Korean vowels (including KoreanClass101 lessons on ㅏ, ㅑ and ㅡ).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these aloud: 오 · 우 · 으

▼ Show answer

o · u · eu

2. Which vowel goes below the consonant, ㅏ or ㅑ? How can you tell?

▼ Show answer

ㅑ. It has a long horizontal stroke; ㅏ has a long vertical stroke, so it goes to the right.

3. How do you tell ㅓ from ㅕ, and ㅡ from ㅣ?

▼ Show answer

ㅓ has its short stroke pointing up and ㅕ has it pointing down. ㅡ is horizontal and ㅣ is vertical.

4. Read these words: 오이 · 아우 · 아이

▼ Show answer

o-i (cucumber) · a-u (younger sibling) · a-i (child)

5. Write in Hangul: o · u · eu · o-i

▼ Show answer

오 · 우 · 으 · 오이

6. What is the difference in the lips between ㅜ and ㅡ?

▼ Show answer

ㅜ is a rounded vowel (lips rounded, "oo"); ㅡ is unrounded (lips flat and spread).

Coming Up in Chapter 3

You now have all the vowel-only blocks you need for a while. Next come the first consonants, ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ, which you will combine with the vowels to make blocks like 가, 나 and 마.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 3 · First Consonants

ㄱ ㄴ ㅁ — Consonants at Last

Until now every block started with the silent ㅇ. Now you can replace it with a real consonant. This chapter teaches three: ㄱ ㄴ ㅁ. Each one combines with each of the five vowels you know to make five new blocks, so by the end you can read 15 blocks and a handful of words.

Your Next Three Letters — ㄱ ㄴ ㅁ

Three of the five consonants that were designed from the shape of the mouth. Wikipedia describes them as: ㄱ the root of the tongue blocking the upper palate, ㄴ the tongue touching the upper palate, and ㅁ the mouth.



g (k)

between English "g" and "k",
made at the back of the
tongue

Memory hook: the shape is the tongue root pushed up against the back of the mouth, or a hook like the letter "g" of *gate*.



n

like the "n" in *no*

Memory hook: the tongue flat along the floor of the mouth and then turning up to touch the roof, like a lowercase "n" lying on its side.



m

like the "m" in *mom*

Memory hook: a square for the mouth shape: the lips closed, with nothing coming out.

About ㄱ: g or k?

Wikipedia's table lists ㄱ at the start of a block as IPA /k/ with the romanisation *g*, so it is written with a "g" but belongs with the "k" sounds. You will hear it somewhere between the two. This course writes it as *g*; Chapter 8 compares it with the stronger ㅋ.

Building Blocks: Consonant + Vowel

Put the consonant first, then the vowel, remembering the rule from Chapter 2: ㅏ and ㅓ go to the right, ㅗ ㅜ ㅡ go below.

	ㅏ a	ㅓ i	ㅗ o	ㅜ u	ㅡ eu
ㄱ g	가 ga	기 gi	고 go	구 gu	그 geu
ㄴ n	나 na	니 ni	노 no	누 nu	느 neu
ㅁ m	마 ma	미 mi	모 mo	무 mu	므 meu

The romanisation is the standard system the Wikipedia page uses (g, n, m; eu for ㅡ). Notice that the blocks are built exactly as the Chapter 2 rule says, and the vowel never changes shape.

Read It — Your First Words

Now you can read real words. Say each block, then the whole word.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	나무	na-mu	tree	two blocks: 나 + 무
2	나	na	I, me	one block; see the Not Yet Verified box
3	아기	a-gi	baby	see the Not Yet Verified box
4	고기	go-gi	meat	see the Not Yet Verified box
5	모기	mo-gi	mosquito	see the Not Yet Verified box

Watch Out: ㅁ and ㅗ Look Alike

ㅁ (square) and ㅇ (circle) are easy to confuse at a glance. The square is *m*; the circle is silent at the start of a block. Check the shape every time: 마 is "ma", 아 is "a".

Not Yet Verified

The pronunciations and the shape descriptions come from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary; the page lists ㄱ as /k/ (RR *g*), ㄴ as /n/ and ㅁ as /m/, and does not give 가, 나 and 마 as example blocks. The remark that ㄱ sounds between "g" and "k" is my own gloss on that /k/-versus-*g* mismatch. A web search confirmed only 나무 "tree" (a TOPIK beginner list); the meanings "I, me" for 나, "baby" for 아기, "meat" for 고기 and "mosquito" for 모기 are from my own knowledge and are unchecked. The page also noted that final ㄱ is not always pronounced /k̟/ (the example 악마 sounds like 양마), which Chapter 9 will return to. My English comparison words and memory hooks are my own.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on beginner Korean vocabulary (a TOPIK beginner list and other learning sites).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 가 · 노 · 무 · 그 · 미

▼ Show answer

ga · no · mu · geu · mi

2. Which consonant is silent at the start of a block, ㅁ or ㅇ? How do you tell them apart?

▼ Show answer

ㅇ is silent; ㅁ is "m". ㅇ is a circle, ㅁ is a square.

3. Read these words: 나무 · 아기 · 고기 · 모기

▼ Show answer

na-mu (tree) · a-gi (baby) · go-gi (meat) · mo-gi (mosquito)

4. Write in Hangul: *na · mo · gu · mi*

▼ Show answer

나 · 모 · 구 · 미

5. Where does the vowel go in **고**, and where in **기**? Why?

▼ Show answer

Below the consonant in **고** (ㅏ has a long horizontal stroke) and to the right in **기** (ㅣ has a long vertical stroke).

6. Write the word for *tree* in Hangul without looking.

▼ Show answer

나무 (na-mu)

Coming Up in Chapter 4

Three more consonants: ㄱ ㅋ ㆁ. With them you will be able to build many more blocks and read longer words.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 4 · More Consonants

ㄷ ㄹ ㅂ — Three More Consonants

You know four consonants so far (ㅇ, ㄱ, ㅋ and ㆁ) and five vowels. Now add ㄷ ㄹ ㅂ. Two of them look like letters you already know, so this chapter spends time on telling them apart.

Your Next Three Letters — ㄷ ㄹ ㅂ

ㄷ

d (t)

between English "d" and "t",
with the tongue tip on the
ridge behind the teeth

Memory hook: a door frame: a
lid, a wall and a floor. "D" for
door.

ㄹ

r (l)

a quick tap of the tongue,
between English "r" and "l"

Memory hook: a zigzag river:
the tongue tapping its way
along the roof of the mouth.

ㅂ

b (p)

between English "b" and "p",
with the lips together

Memory hook: a bucket: a
square with two handles. "B"
for *bucket*.

The Pattern: d (t), b (p), g (k)

Wikipedia's table gives ㄷ at the start of a block as IPA /t/ (romanised *d*), ㅂ as /p/ (romanised *b*) and, from Chapter 3, ㄱ as /k/ (romanised *g*). These three letters are written with the voiced English letters but sit with the unvoiced sounds. English speakers will hear them as in *between*, which is why this course writes both: *d (t)*, *b (p)*, *g (k)*. Chapter 8 contrasts them with their stronger partners ㅌ, ㅍ and ㅋ.

ㄹ at the End of a Block

The page gives ㄹ as /ɾ/ (romanised *r*) at the start of a block and as /l/ (romanised *l*) at the end. So the romanisation of one letter changes with its place: *r* when it starts a block and *l* when it ends one. Chapter 9 covers final consonants in full.

The Block Grid

	ㅏ a	ㅣ i	ㅜ o	ㅡ u	ㅡ eu
ㄷ d	다 da	디 di	도 do	두 du	드 deu
ㄹ r	라 ra	리 ri	로 ro	루 ru	르 reu
ㅂ b	바 ba	비 bi	보 bo	부 bu	브 beu

These 15 blocks, plus the 15 from Chapter 3 and the five with the silent ㅇ, give you 35 blocks.

Look-Alike Warnings

- **ㄷ and ㄴ**. ㄷ has a lid on top (a door frame); ㄴ does not. 다 is "da", 나 is "na".
- **ㅂ and ㅁ**. ㅂ has two handles on top (a bucket); ㅁ is a plain square. 바 is "ba", 마 is "ma".
- **ㄹ** is the only zigzag, so it is easy to spot. Its block is read "ra" at the start of a word and (as you will see) "l" at the end.

Read It — Your First Longer Words

With twelve letters you can read a surprising amount. Say each block, then the whole word.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	나라	na-ra	country	na + ra
2	바다	ba-da	sea	see the Not Yet Verified box
3	다리	da-ri	leg; bridge	one spelling, two meanings; see the box
4	바나나	ba-na-na	banana	see the box

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
5	라디오	ra-di-o	radio	<i>a word borrowed from English</i>
6	두부	du-bu	tofu	<i>see the box</i>
7	모두	mo-du	everyone, all	<i>see the box</i>

Not Yet Verified

The pronunciation values (ㄷ /t/, ㄹ /ɾ/ initial and /l/ final, ㅂ /p/) are from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary. The page tags the ㄹ values [citation needed] and does not discuss flap versus lateral or any restriction on ㄷ ㄹ ㅂ as final letters. It does not say how ㄷ, ㄹ and ㅂ were derived from earlier letters, so this chapter makes no claim about that; the memory hooks (door, river, bucket) are my own. A web search confirmed only *나라* "country" (a beginner flashcard list). The other six words and their meanings, including the two meanings of *다*, are from my own knowledge and are unchecked. The comparisons "between d and t", "between r and l" and "between b and p" are my own English approximations.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on beginner Korean words (learning sites and a flashcard list).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 도 · 리 · 부 · 르 · 비 · 다

▼ Show answer

do · ri · bu · reu · bi · da

2. How do you tell ㄷ from ㄴ, and ㅂ from ㅁ?

▼ Show answer

ㄷ has a lid on top and ㄴ does not. ㅅ has two short strokes on top (handles) and ㅁ is a plain square.

3. Read these words: 나라 · 바나나 · 라디오 · 모두

▼ Show answer

na-ra (country) · ba-na-na (banana) · ra-di-o (radio) · mo-du (everyone)

4. Write in Hangul: *ba-da · du-bu · da-ri*

▼ Show answer

바다 · 두부 · 다리

5. The romanisation of ㄹ is not the same at the start of a block as at the end. What are the two values?

▼ Show answer

r at the start of a block, *l* at the end.

6. Which three letters are written with a voiced English letter but sit with the unvoiced sounds?

▼ Show answer

ㄱ (g, /k/), ㄷ (d, /t/) and ㅂ (b, /p/).

Coming Up in Chapter 5

The last three plain consonants: ㅅ ㅈ ㅊ. Together with the letters you know, they will let you read a large share of everyday Korean words.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 5 · Last Plain Consonants

ㅅ ㅈ ㅎ — The Rest of the Plain Consonants

With ㅅ ㅈ ㅎ you complete the ten plain consonants: ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅇ ㅈ ㅎ. After this chapter you know 15 of the 24 letters, and the remaining nine are variations: stronger "aspirated" consonants and the vowels that begin with a "y" sound.

Your Next Three Letters — ㅅ ㅈ ㅎ

ㅅ

s

like the "s" in *sun*

Memory hook: a tooth or a little tent: the airflow squeezing between the teeth. Wikipedia lists it as one of the five consonants drawn from a speech organ (the tooth).

ㅈ

j

like the "j" in *jam*, but softer, made with the tongue flat against the roof of the mouth

Memory hook: ㅅ with a lid on top, a tent with a flat flag: "J" for the *j*-sound.

ㅎ

h

like the "h" in *hat*

Memory hook: the silent throat circle ㅇ wearing a hat. "H" for *hat*.

A Note on the Values

Wikipedia's table lists ㅅ as /s/ (romanised *s*), ㅈ as the affricate /t͡ɕ/ (romanised *j*) and ㅎ as /h/ (romanised *h*). The page does not give any variation, so those are the values this course uses. Native speakers hear ㅅ a little differently before the vowel ㅣ (see the Not Yet Verified box), but nothing in this chapter depends on that.

The Block Grid

	ㅏ a	ㅣ i	ㅗ o	ㅜ u	ㅡ eu
ㅅ s	사 sa	시 si	소 so	수 su	스 seu
ㅈ j	자 ja	지 ji	조 jo	주 ju	즈 jeu
ㅎ h	하 ha	히 hi	호 ho	후 hu	흐 heu

You can now build 15 more blocks, making 50 in all with every consonant you have learned.

Look-Alike Warnings

- ㅅ and ㅈ. ㅈ is ㅅ with a line across the top. 사 is "sa", 자 is "ja".
- ㅎ and ㅏ. ㅎ is ㅏ with a hat (two short lines on top). 아 is "a" (silent ㅏ), 하 is "ha".
- ㅈ and ㅎ both have a line across the top, but ㅈ has a tent below the line and ㅎ has a circle below it.

Read It — More Words

Fifteen letters give you a large part of the vocabulary of beginner Korean. Say each block, then the whole word.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	시	si	hour (o'clock)	one block; a beginner word list gives it as "si"
2	사자	sa-ja	lion	see the Not Yet Verified box
3	지도	ji-do	map	see the box
4	하나	ha-na	one	the native Korean number; see the box

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
5	소리	so-ri	sound, voice	<i>see the box</i>
6	호수	ho-su	lake	<i>see the box</i>

Not Yet Verified

The values for ㅅ ㅈ ㅎ (/s/, /t͡ɕ/, /h/ and romanised *s, j, h*) are from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary. The page says nothing about how ㅅ sounds before ㅣ, nor about ㅎ being weak between vowels. My remark that ㅅ is heard a little differently before ㅣ (often like "sh") is from my own knowledge and is unchecked. A web search confirmed only that a beginner list gives ㅅ/ as "si", meaning "hour"; it did not find 사자, 지도, 하나, 소리 or 호수, so those meanings are from my own knowledge and are unchecked. The comparison words in the letter cards and the memory hooks are mine. The page also listed the final value of ㅅ and ㅈ as *t* (and probably ㅎ too, though the summary could not confirm the final value of ㅎ); Chapter 9 returns to that.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on beginner Korean words (learning sites and flashcard lists).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 소 · 지 · 후 · 스 · 하 · 조

▼ Show answer

so · ji · hu · seu · ha · jo

2. How do you tell ㅅ from ㅆ, and ㅎ from ㅎ?

▼ Show answer

ㅆ is ㅅ with a line across the top. ㅎ is ㅎ with a "hat" (short lines) on top.

3. Read these words: 사자 · 지도 · 하나 · 호수

▼ Show answer

sa-ja (lion) · ji-do (map) · ha-na (one) · ho-su (lake)

4. Write in Hangul: so-ri · sa-ja · ha-na

▼ Show answer

소리 · 사자 · 하나

5. List the ten plain consonants from this chapter's first paragraph.

▼ Show answer

ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅇ ㅈ ㅎ

6. Which of ㄱ, ㅈ and ㅎ is one of the five letters drawn from a speech organ, and which organ?

▼ Show answer

ㄱ, which Wikipedia lists with ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ as one of the five organ-based consonants (it depicts a tooth). The page does not say how ㅈ and ㅎ were built.

Coming Up in Chapter 6

Back to vowels: ㅣ ㅞ ㅟ, which include the first of the "y" vowels. They will give you many new blocks from the consonants you already know.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 6 · Y-Vowels 1

ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ — Three More Vowels

You have all ten plain consonants. Now three more vowels: ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ. They look like ㅏ, so the only thing to learn is where the short stroke sits and how many there are. All three are vertical-stroke vowels, so they sit to the right of the consonant, exactly like ㅏ.

Your Next Three Letters — ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ

ㅏ

eo

like the "u" in *up* ("uh"), with the mouth fairly open

Memory hook: the short stroke is on the *left*, like a hand held out behind you: "uh?"

ㅑ

ya

like the "ya" in *yacht*

Memory hook: ㅑ with a second stroke: two strokes for the extra "y" sound.

ㅓ

yeo

like the "yu" in *young* ("yuh")

Memory hook: ㅓ with a second stroke: the "y" version of ㅏ.

The Pattern: A Second Stroke Adds "y"

ㅑ is the "y" version of ㅏ (ya), and ㅓ is the "y" version of ㅏ (yeo). Wikipedia's table gives ㅏ as /a/, ㅏ as /ʌ/, ㅑ as /ja/ and ㅓ as /jʌ/ (romanised *a*, *eo*, *ya*, *yeo*), so the pairs differ by exactly a "y" glide. The next chapter gives the same trick for ㅕ and ㅖ.

The Romanisation "eo" Is One Sound

The romanisation *eo* for ㅓ looks like two vowels but is one short sound. Likewise *yeo* is "y" plus that one sound. A guide in the web search describes ㅓ as the "u" of *up* and ㅓ as the "yu" of *young*; the exact sound varies between speakers and between guides, so listen to a Korean speaker when you can.

Which Side Is the Stroke?

- **ㅏ and ㅑ**. The short stroke is on the right for ㅏ and on the left for ㅑ. ㅏ is "a", ㅑ is "eo".
- **ㅓ and ㅕ**. One stroke or two. ㅓ is "eo", ㅕ is "yeo".
- **ㅗ and ㅛ**. ㅗ is a vertical vowel with its stroke at the side; ㅛ is a horizontal vowel with its stroke on top. ㅗ is "geo", ㅛ is "go".

The Block Table

Every plain consonant combines with every vowel. Here are the three new vowels with all ten consonants.

	ㅏ eo	ㅓ ya	ㅕ yeo
ㅇ	어	야	여
ㄱ g	거 geo	가 gya	겨 gyeo
ㄴ n	너 neo	냐 nya	녀 nyeo
ㄷ d	더 deo	다 dya	뎌 dyeo
ㄹ r	러 reo	랴 rya	려 ryeo
ㅁ m	머 meo	먀 mya	며 myeo
ㅂ b	버 beo	뵤 bya	뵈 byeo

	ㅅ eo	ㅆ ya	ㅈ yeo
ㅅ s	서 seo	샤 sya	셔 syeo
ㅈ j	저 jeo	자 jya	져 jyeo
ㅎ h	허 heo	하 hya	혀 hyeo

This table follows the standard block rules: consonant, then a vertical vowel to its right. The romanisation is the regular letter-by-letter spelling; some of these blocks may be rare or pronounced differently from their spelling in real words (I have not checked which), so this course does not rely on the less common ones.

Read It — New Words

Eighteen letters, and you can already read quite long words. Say each block, then the whole word.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	어머니	eo-meo-ni	mother	see the Not Yet Verified box
2	여자	yeo-ja	woman	see the box
3	야구	ya-gu	baseball	see the box
4	거리	geo-ri	street	see the box
5	너	neo	you (informal)	see the box
6	버스	beo-seu	bus	a word borrowed from English

Not Yet Verified

The values and romanisations of ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ (/a/, /ʌ/, /ja/, /jʌ/; a, eo, ya, yeo) are from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary; the page notes that the

values are the traditional ones and that actual speech has diverged. The page does not describe the "second stroke adds y" pattern in those words, so that explanation is my own reading of the table. It also says nothing about telling ㅣ from ㅟ. The English comparisons ("up", "young", "yacht") come partly from a vowel guide found in a web search, and the memory hooks are mine. That search found none of the words in the table, so all six meanings are from my own knowledge and are unchecked. The caution that some blocks in the table may be rare or sound different from their spelling is from my own general knowledge, and I have not checked which blocks it applies to. I have not checked stroke order.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on Korean vowels (LingoDeer and other beginner guides).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 서 · 며 · 야 · 허 · 려 · 버

▼ Show answer

seo · myeo · ya · heo · ryeo · beo

2. How do you tell 아 from 어, and 어 from 여?

▼ Show answer

In 아 the short stroke is on the right; in 어 it is on the left. 여 has two strokes where 어 has one.

3. Read these words: 어머니 · 여자 · 야구 · 버스

▼ Show answer

eo-meo-ni (mother) · yeo-ja (woman) · ya-gu (baseball) · beo-seu (bus)

4. Write in Hangul: geo-ri · neo · yeo-ja

▼ Show answer

거리 . 너 . 여자

5. The vowel ㅑ is the "y" version of which vowel? And ㅓ?

▼ Show answer

ㅑ of ㅏ (a becomes ya) and ㅓ of ㅗ (eo becomes yeo).

6. Where does the vowel go in 거, and where in 고? Why?

▼ Show answer

To the right in 거 (ㅊ has a long vertical stroke) and below in 고 (ㅍ has a long horizontal stroke).

Coming Up in Chapter 7

The remaining "y" vowels, ㅕ and ㅖ (the "y" versions of ㅓ and ㅗ), plus the first aspirated consonant, ㅊ.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 7 · Y-Vowels 2

ㅛ ㅠ ㅈ — The Last Vowels and a New Kind of Consonant

This chapter completes the ten basic vowels with ㅛ and ㅠ, the "y" versions of ㅓ and ㅗ. It also introduces ㅈ, the first of the four aspirated consonants. After it, you know 21 of the 24 letters.

Your Next Three Letters — ㅛ ㅠ ㅈ

ㅛ

yo

like the "yo" in *yoga*

Memory hook: ㅓ with a second sprout. Two strokes pointing up for the "y" sound.

ㅠ

yu

like the word "you"

Memory hook: ㅗ with a second root. Two strokes pointing down for the "y" sound.

ㅈ

ch

like the "ch" in *cherry*, with a strong puff of air

Memory hook: ㅊ wearing a hat: the extra line on top is the extra puff of air.

Plain and Aspirated Consonants

Korean has stops and affricates in three strengths: plain, aspirated and tense. This course teaches the plain and aspirated ones and leaves the tense (doubled) letters to the next course. ㅈ is the aspirated partner of the plain ㅊ you learned in Chapter 5.

- Wikipedia's consonant table lists ㅊ as the plain ("lax") affricate /t͡ɕ/ and ㅈ as the aspirated one, /t͡ɕʰ/ (romanised *j* and *ch*). Its tense partner is ㅊ͡.
- The page also says that lines are added to letters to represent related sounds that are considered more "severe" or "harsh", with ㅏ to ㅏ̃ as its example. For ㅈ it gives no derivation, but the extra line fits the same idea.

- A beginner lesson in the web search tells learners to think about how much air comes out: say ㅈ, then say the same sound with a strong breath, and you have ㅊ.

The Test: A Hand in Front of Your Mouth

Put your hand an inch from your mouth. For ㅈ you feel little air; for ㅊ you feel a puff. Chapter 8 does the same for ㄷ ㅌ ㅍ against ㄱ ㅋ ㅍ.

The Block Tables

The new vowels sit below the consonant, since they are horizontal vowels, like ㅏ and ㅗ.

	ㅕ yo	ㅠ yu
ㅇ	요	유
ㄱ g	교 gyo	규 gyu
ㄴ n	뇨 nyo	뉴 nyu
ㄷ d	도 dyo	두 dyu
ㄹ r	료 ryo	류 ryu
ㅁ m	묘 myo	뮤 myu
ㅂ b	보 byo	부 byu
ㅅ s	쇼 syo	슈 syu

	ㅈ yo	ㅊ yu
ㅈ j	쪼 jyo	쪼 jyu
ㅎ h	효 hyo	휴 hyu

	ㅏ a	ㅑ i	ㅓ o	ㅕ u	ㅗ eu	ㅛ eo
ㅈ ch	차 cha	치 chi	초 cho	추 chu	츄 cheu	처 cheo

As in Chapter 6, some of the less common blocks may be pronounced differently from their spelling; this course does not rely on them.

Read It — New Words

Twenty-one letters let you read most beginner words. Say each block, then the whole word.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	차	cha	tea; car	one spelling, two meanings; see the Not Yet Verified box
2	기차	gi-cha	train	see the box
3	우유	u-yu	milk	see the box
4	요리	yo-ri	cooking	see the box
5	고추	go-chu	chili pepper	see the box
6	치마	chi-ma	skirt	see the box

Not Yet Verified

The values of ㅍ ㅑ ㅓ (/jo/, /ju/, /t͡ɕʰ/; romanised *yo*, *yu*, *ch*) and the statement that ㅓ is the aspirated partner of ㅑ are from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary; the page does not state the ㅑ-ㅓ relationship in prose (only in its table), the IPA values are tagged [citation needed], and the page does not say how ㅓ was derived. The "puff of air" advice is from a web search on aspirated consonants (KoreanClass101 and other lessons). One source in that search gave 차 as "tea"; an earlier search for beginner words listed 차 as "car" and 기차 as "train". The other words (우유, 요리, 고추, 치마) are from my own knowledge and unchecked. The comparisons ("yoga", "you", "cherry") and the memory hooks are mine. I have not checked stroke order.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on aspirated Korean consonants (KoreanClass101, Fluentu and other lessons).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 요 · 유 · 추 · 효 · 처 · 규

▼ Show answer

yo · yu · chu · hyo · cheo · gyu

2. Where do ㅍ and ㅑ go in a block, and why?

▼ Show answer

Below the consonant, because they have a long horizontal stroke (like ㅌ and ㅊ).

3. Which plain consonant is ㅓ the aspirated partner of? What is the difference?

▼ Show answer

ㅑ. ㅓ is pronounced with a strong puff of air; ㅑ with much less.

4. Read these words: 기차 · 우유 · 치마 · 고추

▼ Show answer

gi-cha (train) · u-yu (milk) · chi-ma (skirt) · go-chu (chili pepper)

5. Write in Hangul: *yo-ri* · *cha* · *chi-ma*

▼ Show answer

요리 · 차 · 치마

6. How many of the 24 basic letters do you know now, and which three are left?

▼ Show answer

21. The three left are the aspirates ㅋ ㆁ ㆅ.

Coming Up in Chapter 8

The last three letters: the aspirates ㅋ ㆁ ㆅ, each compared with its plain partner ㄱ ㄷ ㅌ. Then you will know all 24 basic letters.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 8 · The Aspirates

ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ — The Last Three Letters

Three letters remain: ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ. They are the aspirated partners of the plain letters ㄱ ㄷ ㅂ, the same relationship as ㅈ to ㅊ in Chapter 7. When this chapter is done you will know all 24 basic letters of Hangul.

Your Last Three Letters — ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ

ㅋ

k

like the "k" in *kite*, with a strong puff of air

Memory hook: ㄱ with an extra line across it: the extra stroke is the extra puff.

ㅌ

t

like the "t" in *top*, with a strong puff of air

Memory hook: ㄷ with an extra line in the middle: a door with a bar across it.

ㅍ

p

like the "p" in *pot*, with a strong puff of air

Memory hook: a small table: a bar across the top held up by two legs. "P" for *pillar*.

Plain Against Aspirated

Wikipedia's consonant table lists three rows of plosives. The plain ("lax") row is ㄱ ㄷ ㅂ; the aspirated row is ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ; the tense row (ㄲ ㄸ ㅃ) comes in the next course.

PLAIN	ROMANISATION	IPA	ASPIRATED	ROMANISATION	IPA
ㄱ	g	/k/	ㅋ	k	/kʰ/
ㄷ	d	/t/	ㅌ	t	/tʰ/

PLAIN	ROMANISATION	IPA	ASPIRATED	ROMANISATION	IPA
ㅂ	b	/p/	ㅃ	p	/pʰ/
ㅈ	j	/t͡ɕ/	ㅉ	ch	/t͡ɕʰ/

- The small raised ^h in the IPA is the symbol for the puff of air (aspiration).
- The page says that lines were added to letters to represent related sounds that are considered more "severe" or "harsh", with ㅊ to ㅋ as its only example. The look of ㅍ against ㅂ and of ㅊ against ㅈ follows the same pattern, but the page does not say so, and says nothing on how ㅉ was derived.
- The hand test from Chapter 7 works for every pair: you feel a puff for ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ ㅊ and much less for ㅂ ㅅ ㅃ ㅅ.

The Block Table

	ㅏ a	ㅣ i	ㅜ o	ㅜ u	ㅡ eu
ㅋ k	카 ka	키 ki	코 ko	쿠 ku	크 keu
ㅌ t	타 ta	티 ti	토 to	투 tu	트 teu
ㅍ p	파 pa	피 pi	포 po	푸 pu	프 peu

You can now build a block from any of the 24 basic letters by the same rules: consonant first, then the vowel to the right (vertical vowels) or below (horizontal vowels). ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ combine with the other five vowels in the same way.

Look-Alike Warnings

- ㅊ and ㅋ. ㅋ has an extra line across the middle.
- ㅂ and ㅌ. ㅌ has an extra line in the middle of the door frame.

- **ㅁ, ㅂ and ㅅ**. **ㅁ** is a closed square, **ㅂ** is a square with two handles on top, **ㅅ** has a bar across the top with two legs.

Read It — Loanwords and More

The aspirates appear a lot in words borrowed from English, which makes them easy to recognise. Say each word aloud.

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	커피	keo-pi	coffee	a word borrowed from English
2	피아노	pi-a-no	piano	a word borrowed from another language
3	토마토	to-ma-to	tomato	a word borrowed from another language
4	포도	po-do	grape	not a loanword from English; see the Not Yet Verified box
5	코	ko	nose	see the box
6	키	ki	height	see the box

Not Yet Verified

The values of ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ (/kʰ/, /tʰ/, /pʰ/; romanised *k*, *t*, *p*) and their place in the aspirated row come from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary; the page tags the IPA values [citation needed], does not define "aspirated", and does not describe the letters one by one. A web search confirmed 커피 "coffee", 포도 "grape", 피아노 "piano" and 토마토 "tomato" on beginner lists (TOPIK and learnkorean.in). It did not find 코 or 키; "nose" and "height" are from my own knowledge, as is the remark that 포도 is a Sino-Korean word and the loanword origins in the table. The English comparisons and memory hooks are mine, and I have not checked stroke order.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on beginner Korean words and loanwords (TOPIK guide, learnkorean.in, KoreanClass101).

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 카 · 토 · 푸 · 키 · 트 · 피

▼ Show answer

ka · to · pu · ki · teu · pi

2. Match each plain letter with its aspirated partner: ㄱ ㄷ ㅂ ㅈ.

▼ Show answer

ㄱ with ㅋ · ㄷ with ㅌ · ㅂ with ㅍ · ㅈ with ㅊ

3. Read these words: 커피 · 피아노 · 토마토 · 포도

▼ Show answer

keo-pi (coffee) · pi-a-no (piano) · to-ma-to (tomato) · po-do (grape)

4. Write in Hangul: *keo-pi · to-ma-to · ko*

▼ Show answer

커피 · 토마토 · 코

5. What does the raised ^h in /k^h/ stand for, and how can you test it with your hand?

▼ Show answer

Aspiration, a puff of air. Hold a hand in front of your mouth: you feel a puff for ㅋ and little air for ㄱ.

6. List the 14 consonants and 10 vowels you have learned, in two lines.

▼ Show answer

Consonants: ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅇ ㅈ ㅊ ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ ㅎ

Vowels: ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ ㅣ

Coming Up in Chapter 9

The letters are done; now for the blocks themselves. **Final consonants** (batchim) go at the bottom of a block, and they change the way some letters sound.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 9 · Final Consonants

받침 — The Floor of the Block

So far every block has been a consonant and a vowel. Many blocks have a third letter at the bottom: a **final consonant**, called batchim (받침, "support"). This chapter teaches no new letters. It teaches a new position, and one surprise: at the bottom of a block, the fourteen consonants sound like only a few.

Writing a Final Consonant

Wikipedia says that if a block has a final consonant, it is written at the bottom. The block is then three layers: initial, vowel, final.

Block	Initial	Vowel	Final	Sound
산	ㄱ	ㅏ	ㄴ	san
밥	ㅂ	ㅏ	ㅂ	bap
방	ㅂ	ㅏ	ㅇ	bang
날	ㄴ	ㅏ	ㄹ	nal
밤	ㅂ	ㅏ	ㅁ	bam

The final is always written at the bottom of the block, under the initial and the vowel.

Fourteen Letters, Seven Sounds

At the bottom of a block the sound is not the sound at the start. Wikipedia's table gives these final values:

FINAL SOUND	IPA	WRITTEN WITH
k	/k̚/	ㄱ ㅋ

FINAL SOUND	IPA	WRITTEN WITH
n	/n/	ㄴ
t	/ṭ/	ㄷ ㅌ ㅊ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ
l	/l/	ㄹ
m	/m/	ㅁ
p	/Ṗ/	ㅂ ㅍ
ng	/ŋ/	ㅇ

- **Seven sounds.** The page does not state a number; counting the distinct values in its table gives seven, and the beginner guides found in a web search also say that the finals shrink to seven sounds.
- **The little corner mark (˘)** in /ṭ/, /ṭ/ and /Ṗ/ means the sound is *unreleased*: the mouth closes for the sound and stays closed, with no puff. A guide in the search gives 박 as an example, pronounced like 박.
- **ㅇ has two jobs.** It is silent at the start of a block and is "ng" at the end (as in 방).
- **Why it matters.** Different written finals can sound the same (ㄷ ㅌ ㅊ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ all end in "t"), so the spelling of a final cannot always be heard from the sound.

When the Written Letter and the Sound Differ

The spelling keeps the original letter even though the sound has shrunk. Wikipedia's example is 악마: it is written with ㅌ at the end of the first block but pronounced and romanised as if it were 앙마 (*angma*), because the following ㅁ changes the ㅌ to "ng". The spelling does not change. This chapter does not teach these sound changes; it just warns you that they exist.

A Final Consonant Moves Forward

When the next block starts with a silent ㅇ, the final consonant slides over to it. The web search gives these examples:

WRITTEN	SAID AS	WHAT HAPPENS
밥을	ba-beul	the ㅃ of 밥 moves to the empty ㅇ of 을
집에	ji-be	the ㅃ of 집 moves to the empty ㅇ of 에
한국어	han-gu-geo	the ㄱ of 한국 moves to the empty ㅇ of 어

The new blocks 을, 에 and 어 use letters beyond this course's basic set (ㅄ is a compound vowel), but the point is the movement of the final consonant.

Read It — Words with a Final

#	WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	산	san	mountain	<i>a beginner guide gives this</i>
2	밥	bap	rice, a meal	<i>a beginner guide gives "rice"</i>
3	방	bang	room	<i>a beginner guide gives this</i>
4	날	nal	day	<i>a beginner guide gives this</i>
5	밤	bam	night; chestnut	<i>one spelling, two meanings, per the guide</i>
6	한글	han-geul	Hangul	<i>the name of the script; the page gives its sound as han-geul</i>
7	물	mul	water	<i>see the Not Yet Verified box</i>

Not Yet Verified

The final values in the first table are from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary; the page tags its IPA values [citation needed]. Its table gives ㅎ a final value of *t*, but the summary said it could not confirm the IPA for final ㅎ, so I have listed it with the *t* group on the page's evidence only; many guides treat ㅎ as a special case, which I have not checked. The "seven sounds", the unreleased-stop remark, the linking examples and the meanings of 산, 밥, 방, 날 and 밤 come from beginner guides found in a web search (Teuida, Korean Valley,

Learning-Korean.com), not a textbook. The page does not state a linking rule; the "slides over" explanation is the guides'. The meaning of 물 is from my own knowledge. I did not teach double finals (such as ㅍ or ㅌ), which the page says exist among 28 final options, and I did not check the nasalisation rules beyond the one example. I have not checked stroke order.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; web search results from Teuida, Korean Valley and Learning-Korean.com on batchim.

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these blocks aloud: 산 · 밥 · 방 · 날 · 밤 · 물

▼ Show answer

san · bap · bang · nal · bam · mul

2. What sound does ㅇ make at the start of a block, and at the end?

▼ Show answer

Silent at the start; "ng" at the end.

3. Which of ㅅ, ㅈ, ㅊ and ㅌ sound the same as ㅍ at the end of a block? Which final sound do ㅋ and ㆁ share?

▼ Show answer

All of them sound like "t" at the end. ㅋ and ㆁ both end in "k".

4. Break 산, 밥 and 방 into initial, vowel and final.

▼ Show answer

산: ㅅ ㅏ ㄴ · 밥: ㅂ ㅏ ㅂ · 방: ㅂ ㅏ ㅇ

5. Write in Hangul: *san · bap · nal · han-geul*

▼ Show answer

산 · 밥 · 날 · 한글

6. Why is 밥을 said "ba-beul" and not "bap-eul"?

▼ Show answer

The next block (을) begins with a silent ㅇ, so the final ㅃ of 밥 moves forward into it.

Coming Up in Chapter 10

The last chapter: reading practice. You will read real words and everyday signs with all 24 letters and the final consonants, and the course will end with a recap.

Korean Alphabet 1

Course 1 · Chapter 10 · Reading Practice

읽기 — Putting It All Together

You know all 24 basic letters of Hangul and the final consonant. This last chapter gives you a method for reading any block, a big set of practice words made only from what you have learned, and a recap of the whole course.

A Method for Reading Any Block

- 1. **Find the vowel first.** A long vertical stroke (ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ) is to the right of the initial; a long horizontal stroke (ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅑ ㅓ) is below it.
- 2. **Read the initial consonant.** A circle ○ at the start is silent. Remember the look-alikes: ㄴ ㄷ ㅌ, ㄹ ㅍ ㅊ, ㄱ ㅋ, ㆁ ㆅ, ㄷ ㅌ, ㄴ ㄷ, ㄹ ㅍ, ㄱ ㅋ.
- 3. **Check for a final consonant** at the bottom, and use its final sound: k, n, t, l, m, p or ng (Chapter 9).
- 4. **Say the whole block**, then the next, and join them.

Practice Set 1: Blocks

Read each block aloud, then check yourself.

BLOCK	BLOCK	BLOCK	BLOCK
거	효	츠	피
닥	물	밤	방
류	토	셔	산

▼ Show answers

geo · hyo · cheu · pi
dak · mul · bam · bang
ryu · to · syeo · san

Practice Set 2: Words You Already Know

Every one of these appeared in an earlier chapter. Cover the right-hand column, read each aloud, then check.

WORD	ROMANISATION	ENGLISH	FROM
아이	a-i	child	<i>Chapter 1</i>
나무	na-mu	tree	<i>Chapter 3</i>
나라	na-ra	country	<i>Chapter 4</i>
라디오	ra-di-o	radio	<i>Chapter 4</i>
어머니	eo-meo-ni	mother	<i>Chapter 6</i>
버스	beo-seu	bus	<i>Chapter 6</i>
기차	gi-cha	train	<i>Chapter 7</i>
커피	keo-pi	coffee	<i>Chapter 8</i>
피아노	pi-a-no	piano	<i>Chapter 8</i>
토마토	to-ma-to	tomato	<i>Chapter 8</i>
밥	bap	rice, a meal	<i>Chapter 9</i>
한글	han-geul	Hangul	<i>Chapter 9</i>

Practice Set 3: Two New Words

These use only letters you know. Read them before you look at the answer.

WORD	HINT
엄마	ㅇ + ㅣ + 마, then 마 + ㅣ
학교	ㅎ + ㅏ + ㅓ, then ㅓ + ㅕ

▼ Show answers

eom-ma ("mom") · hak-gyo ("school"). Both meanings come from a course listing found in a web search. The sound of 학교 is not exactly its spelling: the ㅓ at the end of 학 changes the sound of the next block, one of the sound changes the next course teaches. The romanisation *hak-gyo* is the plain spelling, not the exact sound.

Beware the Sound Changes

Reading blocks one by one gets you a long way, but Korean has sound changes between blocks (the course met the nasalisation of 악마 into "angma" in Chapter 9, and the linking of a final consonant in 밥을). Your reading will be understandable; it will not always be exact. The next course teaches the main changes.

What This Course Did Not Cover

- The five **tense** (doubled) consonants: ㄲ ㄸ ㅃ ㅆ ㅉ.
- The eleven **compound vowels**: ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ ㅣ ㅚ.
- The eleven **consonant digraphs** (double finals), such as ㅑ and ㅓ.
- Sound changes between syllables, and how Korean is written in rows and spaced.
- Stroke order, which this course left for a later stage.

With those, Wikipedia counts 51 letters in all. You now have the 24 basic letters, which are the core of the system.

Course Recap

CHAPTER	WHAT YOU LEARNED
1	How Hangul was made; syllable blocks; ㅏ ㅑ ㅇ
2	Vowels that sit below: ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ
3	ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ
4	ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ
5	ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ
6	ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ
7	ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ
8	ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ; plain against aspirated
9	Final consonants: fourteen letters, seven sounds
10	Reading practice and what comes next

Not Yet Verified

The counts (24 basic letters, 14 consonants and 10 vowels, 51 in all, 11 compound vowels, 5 doubled consonants and 11 consonant digraphs) are from Wikipedia's Hangul page (the first 100,000 of 212,572 characters), through a summary. The meanings of 엄마 "mom" and 학교 "school" come from a course listing found in a web search; I could not verify other new words, so Practice Set 3 has only these two, and I did not add signs or phrases I could not source. The meanings of the Set 2 words carry the checks and flags of the chapters they came from: most came from beginner lists or from my own knowledge. The statement that 학교 is not pronounced exactly as spelled, and the remarks about sound changes, are from my own knowledge, and I have not checked them against a source. The reading method is my own.

Sources for This Chapter

Wikipedia, "Hangul"; a web search on beginner Korean reading practice (a Udemy course listing and workbook descriptions); and the sources of Chapters 1 to 9.

Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Break 한글 into its two blocks and name every letter in each.

▼ Show answer

한: ㅎ ㅣ ㄴ . 글: ㄱ ㅡ ㄹ

2. Read aloud and give the meaning: 나라 · 밥 · 기차 · 커피

▼ Show answer

na-ra (country) · bap (rice, a meal) · gi-cha (train) · keo-pi (coffee)

3. Write in Hangul: geul · san · mul · ra-di-o

▼ Show answer

글 · 산 · 물 · 라디오

4. Name the three look-alike pairs that differ by one extra line, and say what the extra line adds.

▼ Show answer

ㄱ/ㅋ, ㄴ/ㄷ, ㅈ/ㅊ (and ㅍ/ㅑ is related). The extra line marks the aspirated sound, a stronger puff of air.

5. The final consonants ㄷ ㅌ ㅊ ㅌ ㅌ ㅎ all end in the same sound. Which?

▼ Show answer

"t" (per Wikipedia's table; ㅎ is the one to check, see Chapter 9).

6. Why is reading block by block sometimes not exact?

▼ Show answer

Because the sound of a letter can change next to the neighbouring block, as in 악마 [angma] or the linking of a final into a following vowel (밥을, ba-beul).

Course Complete

You have finished Korean Alphabet 1. You can read the 24 basic letters of Hangeul, build any block, and use the final consonant. For another script course, see Hiragana 1; for a Korean history course, see Korean Political History I: Colonization, Division & the Road to Democracy.