

3 (2)

IN THIS UNIT ...

- More about Hangeul
- More about pronunciation



HANGEUL – THE KOREAN ALPHABET

Let us continue studying Hangeul. In this unit we learn the alphabetical order of Hangeul letters and their individual names, and some of the very basic pronunciation rules.

1 Korean alphabetical order and names of Hangeul letters

Alphabetical order for consonants and vowels, as currently standardised in the Republic of Korea, is as shown in the following boxes.

Consonants	Names
	gi-yeok
	ssang-gi-yeok
	ni-eun
	di-geut
	ssang-di-geut
	ri-eul
	mi-eum
	bi-eup
	ssang-bi-eup
	si-ot
	ssang-si-ot
	i-eung
	ji-eut
	ssang-ji-eut
	chi-eut
	ki-euk
	ti-eut
	pi-eup
	hi-eut

Vowels	Names
	a
	ae
	ya
	yae
	eo
	e
	yeo
	ye
	o
	wa
	wae
	oe
	yo
	u
	wo
	we
	wi
	yu
	eu
	ui
	i

To refer to the consonants themselves, use the names provided in the box below. For tensed consonants, the prefix - (ssang-: *double*) is added to the respective normal consonant. The vowels are referred to as the individual sound they represent.

Alphabetical order is followed letter by letter in units of one syllable. Thus the first entry in a Korean dictionary is , followed by all the compounds whose first syllable is . These compounds are of course themselves presented in alphabetical order, and so the final entry under in a standard concise dictionary would be (*fully, sufficiently*), for () is alphabetically the last consonant and () is alphabetically the last vowel. The next entry would be , followed by all the - compounds, then - and so on.

The tensed consonants, i.e., , , , and , are placed at the conclusion of the respective normal consonant entries, i.e., , , , and . That is, - entries follow the entire - entries and precede - entries.

In dictionaries, words which begin with vowels are ordered under 'zero-initial' consonant (), and thus before () and after ().

Some examples

Consider the following list of Korean family names as an example of Korean alphabetical order in action. If you picked up a Korean telephone book, the names would be in this order.

<input type="text"/>		곽	
권	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
원	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	원		

2 Reading Hangeul

In the first two units we made a few important points about Korean pronunciation, mostly as to how we pronounce vowels and syllable-initial consonants. Let us review them, and study more points on reading syllable-final consonants. For our reading practice, we draw examples from, wherever possible, country/city names around the world and common English loan words, which should not be regarded as foreign words but rather as Korean words of foreign origin.

The letters **ㅅ** and **ㅆ**

Despite the romanisation convention, **ㅅ** (ㅅ, romanised as *s*) and **ㅆ** (ㅆ, romanised as *ss*) are pronounced respectively as *sh* and ‘tensed’ *sh* when they occur in front of the vowel *i*, or a ‘y-combined’ vowel (see Page 5). Listen to the language tapes or CDs and practise reading the following examples.

ㅅ Si-deu-ni Sydney	ㅅ o-a-si-seu Oasis	ㅅ Si-e-ra-ri-on Sierra Leon	ㅅ Mo-ri-syeo-seu Mauritius	ㅅ Me-i-seun-ssi Mr Mason
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The letter **ㅇ** (ㅇ)

The **ㅇ** (ㅇ) letter doubles as a silent, or dummy, consonant when it is the initial consonant in a syllable; and *ng* when it is the final consonant in a syllable (see Page 8). Now, listen and practise.

ㅇ U-reu-gwa-i Uruguay	ㅇ o-pe-ra Opera	ㅇ Sing-ga-po-reu Singapore	ㅇ Ga-bong Gabon	ㅇ Seu-ri-rang-ka Sri Lanka
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The letter **ㄹ** (ㄹ)

When **ㄹ** (ㄹ) occurs as the syllable-initial consonant it is pronounced as *r*, more precisely, ‘flap’ *r* (see Page 5). If it occurs as the syllable-final consonant, however, **ㄹ** is pronounced as *l*, more precisely, ‘retroflex’ *l*. You produce a retroflex *l* sound in the same manner as you do an *l*, except that your tongue tip should be placed on the hard palate, not at the back of the upper teeth. Now, listen and practise.

ㄹ Re-ba-non Lebanon	ㄹ I-ran Iran	ㄹ Ma-deu-ri-deu Madrid	ㄹ Hel-sing-ki Helsinki	ㄹ Ne-pal Nepal
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When the syllable-final **ㄹ** (ㄹ) is followed by another **ㄹ**, that is, when you have two **ㄹ**s between two vowels, the two **ㄹ**s shall be pronounced as retroflex *l*. Now, listen and practise.

ㄹ tel-le-bi-jeon	ㄹ pil-leum	ㄹ keul-leop	ㄹ Chil-le	ㄹ Mal-le-i-si-a
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Normal, tensed and aspirated consonants

Recall that, despite the romanisation convention, (), (), () and () are pronounced respectively as *k*, *t*, *p* and *ch* when they occur sentence-initially (see Page 5).

















In fact, these four consonants, ie *k*, *t*, *p* and *ch*, form series of three in Korean, in which they have *normal* (more precisely, partially aspirated), *tensed* and *aspirated* (more precisely, heavily aspirated) forms, while *s* also has both *normal* and *tensed* forms.

The normal series are , , , and (), while the tensed series are represented as (), (), (), () and (), and the aspirated series as (), (), () and ().

The distinction is to be made clearly when these consonants occur syllable-initially. Listen and practise reading the Korean words in the table on the right.

Normal	Tensed	Aspirated
geun root	kkeun string	keun big
dal moon	ttal daughter	tal mask
 bul fire	 ppul horn	 pul grass
ja-yo “I sleep.”	jja-yo “It’s salty.”	cha-yo “It’s cold.”
sa-yo “I buy.”	ssa-yo “It’s cheap.”	

Now, listen and practice reading the country/city names below. The focus here is on the distinction between normal and aspirated forms. Notice in particular that normal forms, ie , , and , are pronounced as romanised – *g*, *d*, *b* and *j*, respectively – when occurring after a *voiced* sound, eg a vowel. By contrast, pronunciation of aspirated forms, ie , , and , is constant. (Incidentally, tensed forms, ie , , , and , are not used in representing foreign loan words in Hangeul.)

 Ga-na Ghana	 Ka-ta-reu Qatar	 Kong-go Congo	 Mo-na-ko Monaco
 Deo-beul-lin Dublin	 Teo-ki Turkey	 Kae-na-da Canada	 Mol-ta Malta
 Beu-ra-jil Brazil	 Peu-rang-seu France	 Mol-di-beu Maldives	 Ki-peu-ro-seu Kypros
 Ja-me-i-ka Jamaica	 Cha-deu Chad	 Pi-ji Fiji	 Kam-pu-chi-a Kampuchea

Unexploded consonants

When occurring in the syllable-final position, (), () and () are all pronounced as *unexploded k*. Likewise, () and (), and () and (), are to be pronounced respectively as *unexploded t* and *unexploded p* in the syllable-final position. (Note that () and () do not occur as a syllable-final consonant in modern Korean.)

If you are not sure of *unexploded* sounds, say *act*, *opt*, and “the *cat* pulled ...”. You will find that the underlined *k* (represented as *c*), *p* and *t* sounds are not *exploded* as in, for example, *back*, *top* and *cat*. Now, listen to the tapes or CDs and practise reading the following words.

— gi-yeok	— bak	— ki-euk	— di-geut	— ti-eut	— bi-eup	— pi-eup
Name of	outside	Name of	Name of	Name of	Name of	Name of

Also, the letters (), (), (), () and () are all pronounced as *unexploded t* when they occur in the syllable-final position. (Note that () does not occur as a syllable-final consonant in modern Korean.) Now, listen and practise.

— si-ot	— eot	— ji-eut	— chi-eut	— hi-eut
Name of				

The vowels , , and

The distinction between (romanised as oe) and (romanised as we) is not made in standard spoken Korean (see Pages 6 and 10). Despite the romanisation convention, both of them are pronounced we as in *wet* in English. Listen and practise reading the following examples.

In addition, as a result of loss of distinction between and , the distinction between and is likewise being lost in standard spoken Korean.

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