

Learn Korean Ep. 12: "Only"

There are many ways to say "only" in Korean, and it all depends on the context. Which one you pick may depend on whether or not you want to use it as an adverb, or an adjective, etc. Pick and choose the ones you think you'd like to use.

noun + 만

Attach "만" directly after a noun. "만" replaces any Topic Marker or Subject Marker that might've originally gone there.

저**만** 한국말을 합니다.
 "Only I speak Korean."

그는 영화**만** 좋아해요.
 "He likes only movies."

"만" can also follow verbs that have been changed into nouns (see Episode 10 on nominalization).

매일 수업에 가기**만** 하면 졸업할 수 있을 거예요.
 "If you only go to class you'll be able to graduate."
 "졸업하다" means "to graduate," and "수업" means "a class (at school)."

noun + 뿐이다

내게 남은 것은 시간**뿐이다**.
 "The only thing I have left is time."
 "내게" is a shorter way to write "나에게."

While "만" can be used with verbs converted into nouns, "뿐이다" cannot. **In order to use this form with verbs, take the verb stem and add "ㄹ/을 뿐이다"** (ㄹ if the verb stem ends in a vowel, and 을 if it ends in a consonant).

나는 기도할 **뿐이다**.

"I only pray."

"기도하다" means "to pray."

Using "만" this sentence could be written as "나는 기도하기**만** 한다."

noun + 밖에

This form is only used in negative constructions (see Episode 7 on negative sentences). The literal meaning of "밖에" is "outside," as in "집밖에" ("outside the house"). It also translates as "other than" or "except."

나는 한국말**밖에** 못해.

"I can only speak Korean." or "I don't speak anything other than Korean."

그 사람**밖에** 없어요.

"There's only that person" or "There isn't anybody except that person."

Another common place to see "밖에" is in the construction, "to be unable to do anything but~" ("The only thing one can do is~"); this is made by taking the verb stem and adding "ㄹ/을 수밖에 없다."

시험 결과가 아직 안 나왔는데 기다릴 **수밖에** 없어.

"The test results haven't come out yet, so the only thing I can do is wait."

"결과" means "results," and "기다리다" means "to wait."

이제 한국에 있으니까 한국말을 배울 **수밖에** 없다.

"Now that I'm in Korea there's nothing I can do but learn Korean."

noun + 뿐만 아니라

verb stem + ㄹ/을 뿐만 아니라

This one is a combination of "뿐" and "만," and means "It's not only (noun), but~."

그것**뿐만 아니라** 이것도 그래요.

"It's not only that, but this too."

저는 회사원**일 뿐만 아니라** 사장입니다.

"I'm not only an employee, but I'm the president."

"회사원" means "an employee (of a company)," and "사장" means "the president (of a company)."

단지

"단지" can translate as "only," but another good translation is "**simply**."

나는 **단지** 자고 싶다.

"I only want to sleep." or "I simply want to sleep."

다만

"다만" can translate as "only," but another good translation is "**merely**."

나는 **다만** 키가 작을 뿐이다.

"It's only that I'm small." or "It's merely that I'm small."

오직

"오직" is often used in combination with "만" or "뿐."

그건 **오직** 당신**만**이 할 수 있는 일이다.

"That is something that only you can do."

"그건" is a short way of saying or writing "그것은."

내겐 **오직** 너**뿐**이야.

"All I have is only you."

“내겐” is a short way of saying or writing “나에게는.”

단

“단” is used as an **adjective**, so it’s used to describe a noun as being “only” something.

이 세상이 **단** 하나뿐인 책.

“The only (one) book in the world.”

“이 세상” means “the world” (literally, “this world”).

“단 하나” means “only one.”

유일하다

This verb means “to be the only one,” and can be used as either an adverb or an adjective.

As an adverb, it’s “**유일하게**,” and as an adjective, it’s “**유일한**.” Using it either way is fine.

선생님이 **유일하게** 한국말을 할 수 있는 사람이세요.

“The teacher is the only person who can speak Korean.”

선생님이 한국말을 할 수 있는 **유일한** 사람이세요.

“The teacher is the only person who can speak Korean.”

verb stem + ㄹ/을 따름이다

This one can translate as “I’m only~” or “I’m just~,” and is most often used with descriptive verbs (adjectives).

그 친구의 성격이 부러울 **따름이다**.

“It’s just that I’m jealous of his personality.”

스테이크에 케찹을 뿌리는 것은 별로라고 생각할 **따름입니다**.

“I just think putting ketchup on steak isn’t that great.”

Conclusion

I know there are a lot of these, so don't stress about learning all of them. **If you can only pick one to learn, learn "만," as it is the most versatile option.** As for the rest of them, look at the examples and choose which ones you think you could find useful. I hope that you'll be able to expand your Korean through this lesson.

