

Learn Korean Ep. 121: "And then" ~서

There is more than one ~서 form. The most basic ~서 form is one used to mean "because," and connects sentences that show a cause and effect. The ~서 form in this lesson is different, and is an intermediate level grammar form. This ~서 form conjugates the same way as the ~서 form which means "because," but it has a different usage. Make sure to learn how to use ~서 to mean "because" before starting this lesson.

Action Verb Stem + 아/어/etc. + 서

Conjugate an **action verb** as usual, and attach 서.

After this form, finish the sentence using another **action verb**.

This form means that the second action (whatever comes after this ~서 form), happens immediately after the first action.

In this way, the ~서 form is used to show that these two actions are *related* to each other.

Let's compare the ~서 form with the ~고 form.

도서관에 가고 친구를 만났어요.

"I went to the library, and I met a friend."

Using the ~고 form means that you simply did two things – going to the library and meeting a friend.

Perhaps you went to the library and studied, and then called a friend from the library, and met the friend outside.

Or perhaps you went to the library, and met a friend there.

Or perhaps you went to the library, then went to a café and met a friend.

The ~고 form does not specify where any of those actions happened, nor does it show that those actions are related in any way – it simply connects multiple actions, like using "and" in English.

Now let's look at that same sentence using the ~서 form instead.

도서관에 가서 친구를 만났어요.

"I went to the library, and I met a friend."

Although the English translation is the same, this sentence has a different meaning.

Since meeting a friend is now happening right after going to the library, these two actions are related.

This means that you went to the library, and met a friend there; you met a friend **at** the library.

Therefore, the ~서 form will not be used for making general lists of things that you did (or will do), since it shows that the actions are related to each other.

In fact, whenever the two actions are related (one happens right after the other), it will sound more natural to use ~서 instead of ~고.

Also, no matter the tense of the final action verb, this ~서 form only conjugates as normal.

This means that 가다 ("to go") should always become 가서 with this form (not 갔어서).

To change the tense of the sentence, simply change the tense of the final action verb.

Here are some more examples of this ~서 form.

집에 가서 밥을 먹었어요. "I went home and ate (a meal)."

Here, you're not just going home, and then leaving to go eat.

In this sentence, you're eating a meal at your house. This is because immediately after you go home, you eat a meal. So you must be also eating it at your house.

백화점에 가서 화장품을 샀어요.

"I went to the department store and bought makeup."

This means that you bought makeup at the department store, not just that you went to the department store and bought makeup (perhaps somewhere else).

친구를 만나서 얘기했어요.

"I met my friend and talked."

Here, you're meeting a friend and talking with them – not just meeting a friend and talking with someone else.

케이크를 만들어서 선생님께 드렸어요.

"I made a cake and gave it to the teacher."

In this sentence we're making a cake, and then giving that very cake to the teacher.

To summarize, this ~서 form is used to show that two actions are related to each other.

Conclusion

If you have any questions, feel free to send me a message through my web site or on YouTube. Good luck in your studies!

