

Learn Korean Ep. 15: Past Tense

Let's jump right into the conjugation rules for making the past tense.

verb stem + (아/어/etc) + "ㅆ" + ("다" or conjugate it)

Start with the verb stem (the verb, minus the "다"), and add "아" or "어" (etc) – this part is determined in the same way as when you conjugate the "요" form (see Episode 2). Then attach "ㅆ" to the bottom of it. Finally, add a "다" if you just want the **plain form** of your new past tense verb, or conjugate it to any other form (see Episode 17 to learn about the plain form).

If it's easier for you, here's how to turn the "요" form into past tense directly:

"요" form – "요" + "ㅆ" + ("다" or conjugate it)

Here are just a couple of common ways to conjugate the past tense:

"요" form: (see Episode 2) ⇒ Add "어요"

"~니다" Form: (see Episode 21) ⇒ Add "습니다." Or add "습니까?"

Let's take the verb "공부하다," "to study."

- Get the "요" form ⇒ 공부해요
- Remove the "요" ⇒ 공부해
- Add "ㅆ" ⇒ 공부했
- Conjugate the ending *any way you'd like* ⇒ 공부했어요 / 공부했습니다 / etc

Take the verb "놀다," "to play," or "to hang out."

- Get the "요" form ⇒ 놀아요
- Remove the "요" ⇒ 놀아
- Add "ㅆ" ⇒ 놀았
- Conjugate the ending *any way you'd like* ⇒ 놀았어요 / 놀았습니다 / etc

Take the verb "덥다," "to be hot."

- Get the "요" form ⇒ 더워요
- Remove the "요" ⇒ 더워
- Add "ㅜ" ⇒ 더웠
- Conjugate the ending *any way you'd like* ⇒ 더웠어요 / 더웠습니다 / etc

Example Sentences

저는 집에 **갔어요**.

"I went home."

친구에게서 카드를 **받았습니다**.

"I received a card from a friend."

어제 서울이 아주 **추웠습니다**.

"Yesterday Seoul was very cold."

맛있는 음식을 **준비했어요**.

"I prepared some delicious food."

집에 누가 **있었어?**

"Who was at home?"

Two exceptions: "이다" and "아니다"

"이다," "to be," is conjugated differently in the past tense.

consonant + 이었(다) / vowel + 였(다)

After a consonant, add "이었" and then add either "다" (if you want plain form) or conjugate the end. After a vowel, add "였" and then add "다" or conjugate it.

저도 옛날에 학생**이었다**.

"I was also a student a long time ago."

"옛날에" means "a long time ago."

This could have also been conjugated to "이었어요" or "이었습시다," for example.

정말 재미있는 하루**였다**.

"It was a really fun day."

"하루" means "a/one day."

This could have also been conjugated to "였어요" or "였습시다," for example.

"아니다," "to not be," conjugates as "아니**었**(다)."

사실 그는 연예인이 **아니었어요**.

"Actually, he was not a celebrity."

"사실" means "actually" or "in reality," and "연예인" means "a celebrity."

This could have also been conjugated to "아니었습시다," for example.

Conclusion

Past Tense is simple, but takes practice to become quick at making it. As always, practicing what you learn will be the best way to reinforce these concepts. Good luck in your studies!

