

Learn Korean Ep. 3: “Want~” and “Want to~”

They might sound similar at first glance, but “want” and “want to” are two separate grammar forms in Korean. In English we could either say “I **want** an apple,” or “I **want to** eat an apple.” Notice that “want” is followed by a noun that the speaker desires, and “want to” is followed by a verb – this is the difference.

“Want~”

noun + (을/를) + 원하다

Let’s break this up a bit first. Begin with a noun (think “I want **something**”) – that **something** will come first. Then add the object marker; this will be either “을” if the noun ends in a consonant, or “를” if the noun ends in a vowel. I put the object marker in parentheses because it is optional when speaking casually – just know that it normally should be there for speaking politely. Finally, the verb “to want” is “원하다.” Conjugate this verb any way you’d like.

Let’s go over some examples.

저는 펜을 원해요.

“I want a pen.”

여자는 사랑을 원해요.

“Girls want love.”

국민은 새로운 정치를 원합니다.

“The citizens want a new government.”

“국민” means citizen (or citizens), and 정치 means “government.”

그래서 당신이 원하는 것이 뭐예요?

“So what is it you want?”

Here, "원하다" is being used to describe "것이" (것 + the subject marker). "원하는 것" literally means "the thing that (you/I/etc) want." I'll go over how to use verbs in this way in another lesson.

나는 너를 원해.

"I want you."

This sentence uses "나" for "I/me," and "너" for "you," and does not use 요 at the end of the verb "원하다." This sentence would only be used in casual situations with someone you're close with, and with whom it's okay to use slang around.

생일 선물로 뭐를 원하세요?

"What do you want for a birthday present?"

"생일" means "birthday," and "선물" means "present," so together they mean "birthday present." The ending, "하세요," is a polite ending, so this is a polite way to ask the question.

"Want to~" verb stem + 고 싶다

Remember that in order to get the **verb stem**, you take the verb and simply remove the 다 at the end.

After you've got the verb stem, simply attach 고 to the end of it. Then follow that with the verb "싶다," which you can conjugate any way you'd like (don't worry about the actual meaning of the verb "싶다," since it's a bit of an advanced verb).

Let's go over some examples.

가고 싶어요.

"I want to go."

놀고 싶어요.

"I want to play."

“놀다” means “to play,” but when used by teenagers or adults it can translate as “to hang out.” However, it is not the verb used when you want to “play” a game – for that, just use the verb “하다,” “to do,” after the game or activity you want to play.

비빔밥을 먹고 **싶어요**.

“I want to eat bibimbap.”

보고 **싶었어요!**

“I missed you!”

“보다” literally means “to see,” so this sentence means “I wanted to see you!” In Korean, “to see” is the verb most often used for “to miss.” If you miss someone, you can say “I want to see you.” This would be “보고 **싶어요**.”

선생님이 되고 **싶어요**.

“I want to be a teacher.”

You can use the subject marker (이 when used after a consonant, and 가 when used after a vowel) after a noun, followed by the verb 되다 to mean “to become.” This sentence could therefore also be translated as “I want to become a teacher.”

어떤 사람이 되고 **싶습니까?**

“What kind of person do you want to be?”

“어떤” means “what kind of,” and is used as an adjective.

You can see how “want” and “want to” are used differently. I hope that you’ll be able to distinguish them as well, and that this lesson can be helpful. As always, I recommend that you practice these concepts on your own, because practicing will make these concepts become easier and easier.

