

Learn Korean Ep. 60: Korean Pronunciation

Korean pronunciation can be a bit tricky, because it's quite different from English pronunciation. This episode will cover a few important pronunciation tips on commonly mispronounced Korean sounds.

ㄱ, ㅋ, ㆁ

In order to compare these three sounds, let's add a vowel.

가, 까, 카

Let's take a look at them one at a time.

가

This is a cross between a "k" and a "g" in English. It's not a hard sound like "k" in the word "kite," but it's also not a hard "g" sound either like "good." However, if you have to pick one, I'd say it's a bit closer to a "g" than a "k." If you say a soft "g," your pronunciation will be accurate.

까

This next one is actually the same sound as the first, but it's said in a different way. If before saying 가, you take a quick *pause*, stopping your mouth from moving, it will come out as this double version, 까.

Instead of saying 가, take a quick pause beforehand, 까. It might help to compare what this sounds like when it's in the middle of a word.

아가, 아까

Take the above two sounds. 아가 and 아까. The first one, 아가, is simply said straightforward. The second one, however, is 아, and then there's a quick pause. 아까. You can hear it right

after the **아** is said; there is a small pause, as if the speaker is taking a break between the two sounds. **아까**, sounds different from **아가** because of the *pause* between the two letters. This pause is what naturally gives the **까** its distinct sound.

카

The final one, **카**, is equivalent to a hard “k” sound in English. It should be pretty straightforward to make.

Although these sounds may seem similar to an English speaker, and might not seem that important, to a Korean, they’re extremely important, and using the wrong one will be like saying a different word.

Let’s take a look at an example.

기, 끼, 키

기 means energy, **끼** means a meal, and **키** means height. Switching these up can easily lead to a misunderstanding, so remember to practice how these sounds differ, and to make sure they sound unique from each other.

And here’s another tip for practicing. Try saying **가**, **까**, and **카** on your own, and hold up a *piece of paper* in front of your mouth. When saying **가**, the piece of paper should move a tiny bit. When saying **까**, though, the paper shouldn’t move noticeably at all. However, saying **카** should cause the paper to shake. If you’re trying to say one or the other, and are wondering if you’re saying it correctly, you can check yourself with a piece of paper and this method.

All other letters work the same way as these ones. Once you’re comfortable with **가**, **까**, and **카**, you’ll be comfortable with the others.

어, 오, 으

Another few commonly confused sounds are these. 어, 오, and 으. The first one, 어, sounds similar to the "uh" sound at the beginning of the word "annoying." 어. The second one, 오, sounds just like the letter O in English. You can also think of it like the "O" sound in the word "oak." 오. And the third one, 으, sounds like the "oo" sound in the word "good." It might also remind you of the sound of being punched in the stomach.



This sound is another one that's often misunderstood. You can think of it as being close to an English "l," but not an "r."

Some lessons might say that this is an "r" at the beginning of a word and an "l," at the end of a word, but this is actually incorrect. The letter's sound does not actually change, so that's good news for us.

In order to make this sound, place your tongue on the top of your mouth, as if you're going to say the letter "d." Practice by preparing to say "da," but instead, saying "la." And there you go.

에, 애

The biggest difference between these two, is honestly just the spelling. They can both be pronounced the same, as ऐ.

If you want to know the actual difference, 애| is said with the lips *slightly* wider, 애|. Most Koreans don't even know the difference between the two, and you won't hear much of a difference either. Feel free to pronounce these both the same way.

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!

