

Learn Korean Ep. 80: “Approximately” and “About”

This lesson will cover how to make *approximations* in Korean – in simpler words, “guesses.” In English, we often make approximations by using the words “approximately” and “about.”

We’ll take a look at 3 of the most common ways to do this in Korean, using 정도, 쯤, and 약.

Noun (space) 정도

정도 means “about” or “approximately,” and you can use it by placing after a noun. Also remember to add a *space* between it and the word that it comes after.

Let’s take a look at an example.

3 미터 정도예요.

“It’s about 3 meters.”

Notice how in Korean, 정도 – which translates here as “about” – goes *after* what it is that you’re talking about. Using 정도 before instead of after would be *incorrect* and difficult to understand.

2 주일 정도 됐어요.

“It’s been about 2 weeks.”

Using an amount of time with the verb 되다 in the *past tense* is one way to say that an amount of time has passed, or that it has “been” an amount of time, such as in this example.

책상에 의자가 6 개 정도 있어요.

“There are about 6 chairs at the desk.”

Noun + 쯤

쯤 means the same thing as 정도, but is attached *directly* to the word it comes after, without a space.

2 시간쯤 잤어요.

"I slept about 2 hours."

한국에 2 달쯤 있었어요.

"I was in Korea for about 2 months."

식빵은 한 조각에 100 칼로리쯤이에요.

"It's about 100 calories for a piece of bread."

약 (space) Noun

약 also means "approximately," but is used in a different way from 정도 and 쯤. 약 is used *before* what you're talking about, and not after.

Also, 약 is more commonly used in *writing* than in speaking, but it's still okay to use it when speaking. It has a slightly more *textbook* feeling to it than 정도 and 쯤.

If this is your first time hearing about 정도 and 쯤, I'd recommend to use those first before using 약 until you feel more comfortable with the grammar.

Let's take a look at a few examples.

어제의 기온은 약 40 도였어요.

"Yesterday the temperature was approximately 40 degrees Celsius."

기온 means "(weather) temperature."

약 5 명이 왔어요.

"Approximately 5 people came."

가게에는 사과가 약 100 개 있어요.

"There are approximately 100 apples in the store."

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!

