



Korean Ladder Study Note

아하 / 오호 / 흠

Beginner 'I See' and Thinking Sounds

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Colloquial Fillers & Reactions	아하 / 오호 / 흠 Beginner 'I See' and Thinking Sounds

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-COLLOQ-FIL-005>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL-wHOgdOGA>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

When I listen to Korean, I panic because I don't know what to say while the other person is talking. In English I say, "Oh, I see," or "Hmm." What do I say in Korean?

좋은 질문이에요. 한국어에서는 아하, 오호, 흠 같은 짧은 반응이 아주 자주 나와요. In English, these are small listening reactions.

오늘의 핵심은 뜻을 길게 말하지 않는 거예요. A small sound can show: I understand, I'm interested, or I'm thinking.

So I don't always need to say 네 or 맞아요? I can use little reaction sounds?

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	이 카페는 오늘 일찍 닫아요. —	This cafe closes early today.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	아하, 그렇군요. —	Ah, I see.
Junho	그리고 고구마라떼가 유명해요. —	And the sweet potato latte is famous.
Hana	오호, 맛있겠네요. —	Oh, that sounds tasty.
Junho	뭐 마실래요? —	What would you like to drink?
Hana	흠, 저는 커피요. —	Hmm, coffee for me.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
아하 / 오호 / 흠 aha / oho / heum	Ah, I see / Oh, interesting / Hmm	좋은 질문이에요. 한국어에서는 아하, 오호, 흠 같은 짧은 반응이 아주 자주 나와요. In English, these are small listening reactions.
이해 · 흥미 · 생각 ihae · heungmi · saenggak	understanding · interest · thinking	오늘의 핵심은 뜻을 길게 말하지 않는 거예요. A small sound can show: I understand, I'm interested, or I'm thinking.
오호 oho	Oh, interesting	오호 is not huge surprise. It is smaller and calmer than 와. It says, "Oh, that caught my interest."
흠 heum	Beginner 'I See' and Thinking Sounds	흠, 생각해볼게요. That feels very usable.
아하 = 이해 / 오호 = 흥미 / 흠 = 생각 aha = ihae / oho = heungmi / heum = saenggak	aha = understanding / oho = interest / hmm = thinking	좋습니다. Now let's separate them clearly: 아하 is understanding, 오호 is interest, 흠 is thinking.
아하 aha	Ah, I see now	먼저 아하예요. 누가 이유를 설명했어요. 이제 이해됐어요. 그때 아하.
듣고 있다는 신호 deutgo itdaneun sinho	a signal that you are listening	좋습니다. Notice that these are short, but they are not meaningless. They show your listening attitude.



Word	Meaning	Example
이해하면 아하 / 관심 있으면 오호 / 생각하면 흠 ihaehamyeon aha / gwansim isseumyeon oho / saenggakhamyeon heum	understanding → 아하 / interest → 오호 / thinking → 흠	맞아요. If you understand, use 아하 or 아하, 그렇군요. If you are interested, use 오호. If you need time, use 흠.



Grammar / Structure Notes

아하 / 오호 / 흠

아하 / 오호 / 흠 — Ah, I see / Oh, interesting / Hmm

Short reactions you can use while listening

이해 · 흥미 · 생각

이해 · 흥미 · 생각 — understanding · interest · thinking

Pick the reaction by your listening mood

아하, 그렇구나.

아하 + , + 그렇구나 + . — Ah, I see.

맞아요. 아하 means “ah, now I understand.” It often comes right after new information clicks.

아하, 그렇구나.

아하 + , + 그렇구나 + . — Ah, I see.

For example, someone explains why a shop is closed. You can say, 아하, 그렇구나. It means, “Ah, I see, that makes sense.”

오호, 재미있네요.

오호 + , + 재미있네요 + . — Oh, that’s interesting.

오호 shows mild interest or a small surprise. In English, it is like “oh, interesting” or “oh, really.”

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
흠	heum
아하	aha
아하, 그렇군요.	aha, geureokunyo.
오호	oho
오호, 재미있네요.	oho, jaemiinneoyo.
흠, 생각해볼게요.	heum, saenggakae bolgeyo.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 아하 / 오호 / 흠 three times: slow, natural, then inside a short sentence.
- 2 Write one original sentence that was not in the video.
- 3 Rewatch the YouTube lesson and pause when the same pattern appears.



Related / Subsequent Studies

Lesson	Why study it next	Link
네 / 아니요 / 맞아요 Natural Korean Reactions	A1 Colloquial: compare 네 / 아니요 / 맞아요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-COLLOQ-FIL-001
아 / 오 / 헐 / 어머 First Korean Interjections for Surprise and Feeling	A1 Colloquial: compare 아 / 오 / 헐 / 어머 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-COLLOQ-FIL-003
어 Tiny Spoken Reactions Koreans Use Nonstop	A1 Colloquial: compare 어 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-COLLOQ-FIL-002
에이 / 어휴 / 아이참 실망과 짜증을 담은 첫 감탄사	A1 Colloquial: compare 에이 / 어휴 / 아이참 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-COLLOQ-FIL-004

My Notes

Your ladder to fluent Korean. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.