



## Korean Ladder Study Note

# 아요 / 어요

## The Polite Present Tense

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Grammar Verb Conjugation	아요 / 어요 The Polite Present Tense

## Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-CNJ-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-CNJ-001>

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iROALLRxb38)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iROALLRxb38>

[Visit Korean Ladder for all free lessons](https://www.koreanladder.com)

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

## Core Idea

Okay, real question. I learned that 가다 means 'to go.' So why does nobody actually SAY 가다?

Right? In the textbook it's 먹다, but in real life I keep hearing 먹어요. Where did the 다 go?

좋은 질문이에요. The 다 form is the dictionary form. To actually speak politely, we trade 다 for 아요 or 어요.

Here is the whole idea. Take the verb, drop 다, then add 아요 or 어요. That's it.

## Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	뭐 마세요? —	What are you drinking?
Hana	저는 커피 마세요. —	I'm drinking coffee.
Junho	지금 책 읽어요? —	Are you reading a book now?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	네, 읽어요. —	Yes, I'm reading.

## Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
동사 + 다 → 동사 + 아요 / 어요 dongsa + da → dongsa + ayo / eoyo	verb + 다 → verb + polite present ending	좋은 질문이에요. The 다 form is the dictionary form. To actually speak politely, we trade 다 for 아요 or 어요.
동사 + 아요 / 어요 dongsa + ayo / eoyo	verb stem + polite present ending	Here is the whole idea. Take the verb, drop 다, then add 아요 or 어요. That's it.
먹다 meok-da	to eat (dictionary form)	The part before 다 is the 'stem.' 먹다, the stem is 먹. 가다, the stem is 가. We always start from the stem.
모음 조화 moeum johwa	vowel harmony — the vowel picks the ending	Then one simple rule decides 아요 or 어요. We call it vowel harmony — 모음 조화.
ㅏ / ㅑ → 아요 a / o → ayo	bright vowels ㅏ · ㅑ take 아요	Look at the last vowel in the stem. If it is ㅏ or ㅑ, the bright vowels, add 아요.
그 외 모음 → 어요 geu oe moeum → eoyo	all other vowels take 어요	Every other vowel takes 어요. So bright 아 · 오 go with 아요, and everything else goes with 어요. One look, one choice.
먹어요 meogeoyo	eat / am eating (polite)	먹다, to eat. The stem 먹 has the vowel ㅏ — not ㅏ or ㅑ — so we add 어요. 먹어요.
읽어요 ilgeoyo	read / am reading (polite)	읽다, to read. Stem 읽, vowel ㅣ . Not bright, so 어요 — 읽어요.



## Grammar / Structure Notes

### 동사 + 다 → 동사 + 아요 / 어요

동사 + 다 → 동사 + 아요 / 어요 — verb + 다 → verb + polite present ending

다 is the dictionary form; we swap it out to speak.

### 동사 + 아요 / 어요

동사 + 아요 / 어요 — verb stem + polite present ending

Step 1: drop 다. Step 2: choose 아요 or 어요.

### 먹다

먹 + 다 — to eat (dictionary form)

The part before 다 is the 'stem.' 먹다, the stem is 먹. 가다, the stem is 가. We always start from the stem.

### 모음 조화

모음 조화 — vowel harmony — the vowel picks the ending

Look at the stem's last vowel.

### ㅏ / ㅑ → 아요

ㅏ / ㅑ → 아요 — bright vowels ㅏ · ㅑ take 아요

Bright stays with bright.

## Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
머거요	meogeoyo
사라요	sarayo
와요	wayo

## Self-Check

- 1 Say 아요 / 어요 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
도 Saying 'Also', 'Too', and 'Even' in Korean	A1 Grammar: compare 도 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-PRT-006">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-PRT-006</a>
안 Two Ways to Say 'No/Can't'	A1 Grammar: compare 안 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-NEG-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-NEG-001</a>
에 The Korean Particle for Place and Time	A1 Grammar: compare 에 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-PRT-004">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-PRT-004</a>
에서 Where the Action Happens	A1 Grammar: compare 에서 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-PRT-005">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-PRT-005</a>

## My Notes

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