



## Korean Ladder Study Note

# ㅈ / ㅊ / ㅉ

## The Three Korean 'J/Ch' Sounds

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Pronunciation Consonants	ㅈ / ㅊ / ㅉ The Three Korean 'J/Ch' Sounds

## Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q\\_81oZxXVWA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_81oZxXVWA)

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

## Core Idea

Okay, real talk — 자, 차, 짜. To me those are basically the same word. What am I missing?

Right? I say 'cha' for all three and just hope for the best.

In Korean these are three different sounds. 자 is soft, 차 has a puff of air, and 짜 is tight and tense.

The letters are 지읒, 치읒, 쌍지읒 — ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅉ. Same place in the mouth; only the airflow changes.

## Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	뭐 마실래요? 차 어때요? —	What do you want to drink? How about tea (차)?
Hana	저는 짜장면하고 물 주세요. —	I'll have jjajangmyeon (짜장면) and water, please.
Junho	자, 여기 있어요. 잘 먹어요. —	There (자, well then) — here you go. Enjoy.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	고마워요. 정말 맛있어요. —	Thank you. It's really delicious.

## Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
자 · 차 · 짜 ja · cha · jja	plain · aspirated · tense	In Korean these are three different sounds. 자 is soft, 차 has a puff of air, and 짜 is tight and tense.
ㅈ / ㅊ / ㅉ j / ch / jj	one spot, three airflows	The letters are 지읒, 치읒, 쌍지읒 — ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅉ. Same place in the mouth; only the airflow changes.
자 ja	plain — relaxed, almost no air	Let's hear them clean. 자.
차 cha	aspirated — strong puff of air	Now 차 — feel the puff of air on your hand.
짜 jja	tense — tight throat, no puff	And 짜 — squeeze it. Tense, no air at all.
차 → 바람 O cha → baram O	'baram' means air/wind — 차 has it	맞아요. Hold a hand to your mouth. 차 pushes air. 자 barely moves it. 짜 blocks it and pops.
자 vs 짜 ja vs jja	relaxed vs clenched	Tension. 자 is loose and relaxed. 짜 is like clenching your jaw before you speak — tight and sharp.
자 (not 차) ja (not cha)	The Three Korean 'J/Ch' Sounds	좋아요. Soft and easy. Just keep 자 relaxed — don't let a puff sneak in and turn it into 차.



## Grammar / Structure Notes

### 자 · 차 · 짜

자 · 차 · 짜 — plain · aspirated · tense

Air and tension change the meaning.

### ㅈ / ㅊ / ㅉ

ㅈ / ㅊ / ㅉ — one spot, three airflows

ㅈ plain · ㅊ aspirated · ㅉ tense

### 자

자 — plain — relaxed, almost no air

Like the 'j' in 'jar', but softer.

### 차

차 — aspirated — strong puff of air

Like 'ch' in 'church', extra breath.

### 짜

짜 — tense — tight throat, no puff

Hold the sound back, then release.

## Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
자	ja
차	cha
짜	jja
자요	jeo-neun jo-geum ja-yo
자짜	ja → jja

## Self-Check

- 1 Say ㅈ / ㅊ / ㅉ 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
ㄹ 발음 The Korean R/L Sound at the Start and Middle of Words	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㄹ 발음 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-002">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-002</a>
ㅇ의 두 얼굴 첫소리 묵음과 받침 받침 'ㅇ'	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅇ의 두 얼굴 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-004">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-004</a>
ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ Aspirated and Tense Consonants	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅋ ㅌ ㅍ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-001</a>
ㅅ Plain and Tense Sibilants	A2 Pronunciation: compare ㅅ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson <a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-001</a>

## My Notes

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