



Korean Ladder Study Note

갈 / 칼 / 깔

Your First ㄱ · ㅋ · ㄲ Minimal Pairs

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Pronunciation Consonants	갈 / 칼 / 깔 Your First ㄱ · ㅋ · ㄲ Minimal Pairs

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-014>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuuxScy13M8>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Here is my beginner problem. I hear 갈, 칼, and 깔, and they sound almost the same. Is the vowel changing?

좋은 질문이에요. The vowel 아 is the same. The difference is the first consonant: 기억, 키움, and 쌍기억.

Today we train only the start of the word, before longer vocabulary. 갈, 칼, 깔.

The pattern is simple. 기억 is plain, 키움 has a strong puff of air, and 쌍기억 is tight with almost no puff.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	칼 있어요? —	Do you have a knife?
Junho	네, 칼 있어요. —	Yes, I have a knife.
Hana	돗자리 깔게요. —	I'll spread out the mat.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	좋아요. 같이 해요. —	Okay. Let's do it together.
Hana	칼 있어요? —	Do you have a knife?
Junho	네, 칼 있어요. —	Yes, I have a knife.
Hana	돗자리 깔게요. —	I'll spread out the mat.
Junho	좋아요. 같이 해요. —	Okay. Let's do it together.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
ㄱ · ㅋ · ㆁ g · k · kk	plain · aspirated · tense	좋은 질문이에요. The vowel 아 is the same. The difference is the first consonant: 기억, 키움, and 쌍기역.
갈 / 칼 / 깔 gal / kal / kkal	will go · knife · spread or lay out	Today we train only the start of the word, before longer vocabulary. 갈, 칼, 깔.
ㄱ plain · ㅋ aspirated · ㆁ tense g · k · kk	light sound · puffed sound · tight sound	The pattern is simple. 기억 is plain, 키움 has a strong puff of air, and 쌍기역 is tight with almost no puff.
ㄱ ≠ ㅋ ≠ ㆁ g ≠ k ≠ kk	Three different Korean consonants	맞아요. English K is not enough. Korean separates plain, aspirated, and tense more clearly.
갈 gal	Your First ㄱ · ㅋ · ㆁ Minimal Pairs	Listen to the plain sound first. 갈. 갈. The start is light, not breathy, not squeezed.
칼 kal	Your First ㄱ · ㅋ · ㆁ Minimal Pairs	Now the aspirated sound. 칼. 칼. You should feel a clear puff of air at the start.
깔 kkal	Your First ㄱ · ㅋ · ㆁ Minimal Pairs	Now the tense sound. 깔. 깔. Tighten the start, like the sound is held for a split second, with almost no air.
갈 · 칼 · 깔 gal · kal · kkal	Your First ㄱ · ㅋ · ㆁ Minimal Pairs	Now hear them in a row. 갈, 칼, 깔.



Grammar / Structure Notes

ㄱ · ㅋ · ㄲ

ㄱ · ㅋ · ㄲ — plain · aspirated · tense

Same vowel, different starting consonant

갈 / 칼 / 깔

갈 / 칼 / 깔 — will go · knife · spread or lay out

Minimal pair set: only the first consonant changes

ㄱ plain · ㅋ aspirated · ㄲ tense

ㄱ plain · ㅋ aspirated · ㄲ tense — light sound · puffed sound · tight sound

At the start of a word

ㄱ ≠ ㅋ ≠ ㄲ

ㄱ ≠ ㅋ ≠ ㄲ — Three different Korean consonants

Do not collapse them into one English sound

갈칼깔

갈 + 칼 + 깔 — plain, aspirated, tense

I think I hear it. 갈 is light, 칼 has the puff, and 깔 is tight.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
갈	gal
칼	kal
깔	kkal
갈, 칼, 깔	gal · kal · kkal

Self-Check

- 1 Say 갈 / 칼 / 깔 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
ㄷ / ㅌ / ㅌ The Three Korean D/T Sounds	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㄷ / ㅌ / ㅌ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-006
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 https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-002
ㄴ / ㄷ / ㅎ The Soft Korean Consonants Beginners Overlook	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㄴ / ㄷ / ㅎ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-008
ㅇ의 두 얼굴 첫소리 묵음과 받침 받침 'ㅇ'	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅇ의 두 얼굴 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-004

My Notes

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