



## Korean Ladder Study Note



### The Two Rounded Vowels Beginners Confuse

| Level                    | Topic                   | Focus                                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| A1 · Beginner<br>TOPIK 1 | Pronunciation<br>Vowels | ㅗ<br>The Two Rounded Vowels Beginners Confuse |

## Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-007>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxnYt1NQkFw>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

## Core Idea

Okay, confession: I tried to order water and I think I asked for a cow. How do I stop mixing up these two sounds?

그건 아주 흔한 실수예요. It's a very common mix-up, and it's fixable in one lesson.

둘 다 입술을 둥글게 만들어요. Both vowels round the lips, so they feel similar — but the tongue height is different.

먼저 오. The first one is 오 — like the 'o' in 'go' or 'boat', but held pure, without gliding into a 'w'.

## Conversation Snapshot

| Speaker | Korean                 | Meaning                 |
|---------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hana    | 소 한 마리, 수 하나.<br>—     | One cow, one number.    |
| Junho   | 소는 '오', 수는 '우'예요.<br>— | 'So' has 오, 'su' has 우. |



| Speaker | Korean            | Meaning                  |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Hana    | 소 두 마리도 있어요.<br>— | There are two cows, too. |
| Junho   | 네, 소 두 마리요.<br>—  | Yes, two cows.           |

## Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

| Word                    | Meaning                                                  | Example                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ㅗ · ㅜ<br>o · u          | two rounded vowels                                       | 둘 다 입술을 둥글게 만들어요. Both vowels round the lips, so they feel similar — but the tongue height is different. |
| ㅗ<br>o                  | like the 'o' in 'go' / 'boat' (without gliding to a 'w') | 먼저 오. The first one is 오 — like the 'o' in 'go' or 'boat', but held pure, without gliding into a 'w'.    |
| ㅜ<br>u                  | like the 'oo' in 'moon'                                  | 그리고 우. Then 우 — like the 'oo' in 'moon', with the lips pushed further forward.                           |
| 오<br>o                  | The Two Rounded Vowels Beginners Confuse                 | 오 할 때 입을 조금 열어요. For 오, your lips are round but a little open — like a small egg shape.                  |
| 우<br>u                  | The Two Rounded Vowels Beginners Confuse                 | 우 할 때 입술을 앞으로 내밀어요. For 우, push the lips forward into a little tunnel, opening smaller.                  |
| 오 / 우<br>o / u          | The Two Rounded Vowels Beginners Confuse                 | 이제 나란히 들어요. Now hear them side by side: 오, 우. Slightly open, then pushed forward.                        |
| 소가 있어요<br>so-ga isseoyo | There is a cow.                                          | 단어로 볼게요. In a word: 소가 있어요 — 'There is a cow.' The 소 carries 오.                                          |
| 수가 많아요<br>su-ga manayo  | There are many numbers.                                  | 비교해요. Compare: 수가 많아요 — 'There are many numbers.' The 수 carries 우.                                       |



## Grammar / Structure Notes

ㅏ · ㅜ

ㅏ · ㅜ — two rounded vowels

Same lip-rounding, different tongue height — that's the whole trick.

ㅏ

ㅏ — like the 'o' in 'go' / 'boat' (without gliding to a 'w')

Lips rounded, tongue mid-high. Keep it steady — don't let it slide into 'ow'.

ㅜ

ㅜ — like the 'oo' in 'moon'

Lips tighter and more forward, tongue high in the back.

### 소가 있어요

소 + 가 + 있어요 — There is a cow.

단어로 볼게요. In a word: 소가 있어요 — 'There is a cow.' The 소 carries 오.

### 수가 많아요

수 + 가 + 많아요 — There are many numbers.

비교해요. Compare: 수가 많아요 — 'There are many numbers.' The 수 carries 우.

## Pronunciation Loop

| Phrase | How to practice |
|--------|-----------------|
| 오      | o               |
| 우      | u               |
| 오, 우   | o / u           |
| 도, 두   | do / du         |
| 두      | du              |
| 두, 도   | du / do         |
| 몸, 문   | mom / mun       |

## Self-Check

- 1 Say ㅏ 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                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ㅏ<br>The Two Open Vowels<br>Beginners Blur | A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.             | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-006">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-006</a> |
| ㅗ<br>The Vowels That Now<br>Sound the Same | A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.             | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002</a> |
| ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅛ / ㅜ<br>The 'Y' Glide Vowels      | A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅛ / ㅜ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer. | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004</a> |
| ㅜ<br>The Vowels English<br>Speakers Mix Up | A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅜ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.             | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-001</a> |

## My Notes

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