



Korean Ladder Study Note



The 'Ya' and 'Yeo' Glides Beginners Swap

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Pronunciation Vowels	ㅏ The 'Ya' and 'Yeo' Glides Beginners Swap

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-017>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMkGno7D5Q8>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Hana, Junho, the other day I was trying to ask for directions to a subway station, but the clerk handed me headache pills instead.

아, 역 and 약. Many English speakers mix up ㅏ and ㅑ because both start with a quick y glide.

If your mouth opens too wide on ㅑ, it easily sounds like ㅏ. So 역 becomes 약.

맞아요. 오늘 집중해 볼 내용은 ㅏ와 ㅑ 구별이에요. In English, today's focus is distinguishing ㅏ versus ㅑ.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	실례지만, 서울역이 어디예요? —	Excuse me, where is Seoul Station?
Hana	저쪽으로 곧장 가시면 돼요. —	You can go straight in that direction.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	혹시 약국도 가까운가요? —	Is there also a pharmacy nearby?
Hana	네, 역 바로 옆에 약국이 있어요. —	Yes, there is a pharmacy right next to the station.
Junho	실례지만, 서울역이 어디예요? —	Excuse me, where is Seoul Station?
Hana	저쪽으로 곧장 가시면 돼요. —	You can go straight in that direction.
Junho	혹시 약국도 가까운가요? —	Is there also a pharmacy nearby?
Hana	네, 역 바로 옆에 약국이 있어요. —	Yes, there is a pharmacy right next to the station.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
ㅏ vs ㅑ ya vs. yeo	Mouth shape: Open wide vs. Relaxed neutral	맞아요. 오늘 집중해 볼 내용은 ㅏ와 ㅑ 구별이에요. In English, today's focus is distinguishing ㅏ versus ㅑ.
ㅏ [ya] ya	y + a: mouth drops open wide	모음 ㅏ는 아 소리로 끝나서 입을 크게 벌려요. ㅏ ends on the open 아 sound, so your mouth drops open wide.
ㅑ [yeo] yeo	y + eo: mouth stays relaxed and neutral	반면에 모음 ㅑ는 어 소리로 끝나요. ㅑ finishes on the relaxed 어 sound, keeping the mouth neutral without opening wide.
야 ya	The 'Ya' and 'Yeo' Glides Beginners Swap	Let's hear the two sounds side by side. Listen to the open vowel first: 야.
여 yeo	The 'Ya' and 'Yeo' Glides Beginners Swap	Now listen to the neutral glide: 여.
야 vs 여 ya vs. yeo	The 'Ya' and 'Yeo' Glides Beginners Swap	Now in sequence. 야, 여. 야, 여.
약 yak	medicine	Let's put them into real vocabulary. First, the word for medicine: 약.
역 yeok	station	완벽해요. Now compare that with the word for subway station: 역.



Grammar / Structure Notes

ㅏ vs ㅑ

ㅏ vs ㅑ — Mouth shape: Open wide vs. Relaxed neutral

Both start with a quick [y] glide

ㅏ [ya]

ㅏ [ya] — y + a: mouth drops open wide

Jaw drops downward

ㅑ [yeo]

ㅑ [yeo] — y + eo: mouth stays relaxed and neutral

Jaw stays neutral

약

약 — medicine

Let's put them into real vocabulary. First, the word for medicine: 약.

약

약 — medicine

약. 입을 활짝 벌리면서 발음하세요. Open your mouth wide: 약.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
야	ya
여	yeo
야, 여	ya vs. yeo
야구	yagu
여기	yeogi
야구, 여기	yagu vs. yeogi

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 The Two Open Vowels Beginners Blur	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-006
ㅗ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002
ㅑ / ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅗ The 'Y' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅑ / ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004
ㅛ The 'Yae' and 'Ye' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅛ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-010

My Notes

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