



Korean Ladder Study Note

Counting in Korean

Native vs Sino Numbers

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Vocabulary Numbers & Counting	Counting in Korean Native vs Sino Numbers

Study Links

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

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

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

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

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

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Core Idea

Okay, here's my real problem. I learned 하나, 둘, 셋 — one, two, three. Then I tried to say a phone number and a Korean friend just laughed. Why?

그건 아주 흔한 실수예요. In English, that's a very common mistake. Korean actually has two complete sets of numbers, and each one has its own job.

We call them Native Korean numbers and Sino-Korean numbers. Native is homegrown; Sino-Korean comes from Chinese roots. Same idea, two toolboxes.

Let's hear the native set first, one to five: 하나, 둘, 셋, 넷, 다섯. These are the ones you say when you count things around you.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	지금 몇 시예요? —	What time is it now?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	두 시 십 분이에요. —	It's two ten.
Hana	커피 두 잔에 얼마예요? —	How much for two coffees?
Junho	팔천 원이에요. —	It's eight thousand won.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
고유어 수 / 한자어 수 goyueo su / hanja-eo su	Native numbers / Sino-Korean numbers	We call them Native Korean numbers and Sino-Korean numbers. Native is homegrown; Sino-Korean comes from Chinese roots. Same idea, two toolboxes.
하나, 둘, 셋, 넷, 다섯 hana, dul, set, net, daseot	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (native)	Let's hear the native set first, one to five: 하나, 둘, 셋, 넷, 다섯. These are the ones you say when you count things around you.
일, 이, 삼, 사, 오 il, i, sam, sa, o	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Sino)	And now the Sino-Korean set, one to five: 일, 이, 삼, 사, 오. These show up in money, minutes, dates, and phone numbers.
일, 이, 삼 il, i, sam	phone numbers use Sino	So when Brian said his phone number with 하나, 둘, 셋, he reached into the wrong toolbox. Phone numbers want 일, 이, 삼.
사과 세 개 sagwa se gae	three apples	Let's start with native numbers. We use them to count objects, people, and animals — usually with a little counter word attached.
명사 + 수 + 단위 myeongsa + su + danwi	noun + number + counter	Okay so the pattern is noun, then number, then counter. Apple — three — unit. That actually feels tidy.
삼천 원 samcheon won	3,000 won	Now the Sino side. Money is pure Sino-Korean. 삼천 원 is three thousand won — you'd never say 셋천 here.
가격은 한자어 gagyeogeun hanja-eo	prices use Sino-Korean	So big numbers and prices lean Sino. That makes sense — counting cash all night with 하나, 둘 would take forever.



Grammar / Structure Notes

고유어 수 / 한자어 수

고유어 수 / 한자어 수 — Native numbers / Sino-Korean numbers

Two full sets — pick the right one for the job

하나, 둘, 셋, 넷, 다섯

하나, 둘, 셋, 넷, 다섯 — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (native)

Native = counting things, age, hours

일, 이, 삼, 사, 오

일, 이, 삼, 사, 오 — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Sino)

Sino = money, minutes, dates, phone numbers

일, 이, 삼

일, 이, 삼 — phone numbers use Sino

Wrong toolbox = wrong number

무엇을 세나요?

무엇을 세나요? — What are you counting?

The noun chooses the number set

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
저는 서른 살이에요	jeoneun seoreun sarieyo
두 잔	du jan
둘 → 두	dul → du
팔천 원	palcheon won

Self-Check

- 1 Say Counting in Korean 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
물 / 커피 / 밥 Essential Food Words	A1 Vocabulary: compare 물 / 커피 / 밥 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-VOCAB-FOO-001
오늘 / 내일 / 어제 Talking About Days	A1 Vocabulary: compare 오늘 / 내일 / 어제 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-VOCAB-TIM-001
집 / 방 / 화장실 Rooms and Everyday Things at Home	A1 Vocabulary: compare 집 / 방 / 화장실 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-VOCAB-HOM-001
공항 / 기차역 / 표 Getting Around While Traveling	B1 Vocabulary: compare 공항 / 기차역 / 표 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-VOCAB-TRV-001

My Notes

Free Korean lessons, one rung at a time. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.