



Korean Ladder Study Note

-(으)면

Saying 'If' and 'When' in Korean

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Grammar Connectors	-(으)면 Saying 'If' and 'When' in Korean

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-CON-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9Fn2J9W0jU>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question to start. How do I say 'if' in Korean? In English it's one tiny word — do I just drop it in somewhere?

Right? And here's the thing that trips me up — sometimes it feels less like 'if' and more like 'when.' Same word for both?

오늘의 핵심은 -(으)면이에요. 동사나 형용사 뒤에 붙여서 조건을 만들어요. In English, -(으)면 means 'if' — and sometimes 'when.'

규칙은 아주 간단해요. 받침이 없으면 -면, 받침이 있으면 -으면. If the stem ends in a vowel, add 면. If it ends in a consonant, add 으면.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	주말에 날씨가 좋으면 등산 갈까요? —	If the weather's nice this weekend, shall we go hiking?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	네, 비가 안 오면 좋아요. —	Yes, if it doesn't rain, that'd be great.
Hana	그럼 아침에 일어나면 전화할게요. —	Then when I wake up in the morning, I'll call you.
Junho	좋아요. 시간이 되면 같이 점심도 먹어요. —	Great. If there's time, let's have lunch together too.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
-(으)면 -(eu)myeon	if / when (condition ending)	오늘의 핵심은 -(으)면이에요. 동사나 형용사 뒤에 붙여서 조건을 만들어요. In English, -(으)면 means 'if' — and sometimes 'when.'
받침 없음 → -면 / 받침 있음 → -으면 no batchim → -myeon / batchim → -eumyeon	vowel stem → -면 · consonant stem → -으면	규칙은 아주 간단해요. 받침이 없으면 -면, 받침이 있으면 -으면. If the stem ends in a vowel, add -면. If it ends in a consonant, add -으면.
시간이 있으면 가요 sigani isseumyeon gayo	If I have time, I go.	예문이에요. 시간이 있으면 가요. If I have time, I go. '있다'는 받침이 있으니까 있으면.
봄이 되면 따뜻해요 bomi doemyeon ttatteuthaeyo	When spring comes, it gets warm.	이번엔 봄이 되면 따뜻해요. When spring comes, it gets warm. '되다'는 받침이 없으니까 되면. And notice — here it feels like 'when,' not 'if.'
커피를 마시면 잠이 안 와요 keopireul masimyeon jami an wayo	If/when I drink coffee, I can't sleep.	하나 더요. 저는 커피를 마시면 잠이 안 와요. When I drink coffee, I can't sleep — a habit, a regular result. -(으)면 also covers those everyday patterns.
확실함 → when · 불확실함 → if —	certain event → 'when' · uncertain event → 'if'	맥락이 정해줘요. 확실한 일이면 'when,' 확실하지 않으면 'if.' The context decides. Spring always comes, so 봄이 되면 is 'when.' Maybe I won't have time, so 시간이 있으면 is 'if.'
봄이 되면 / 시간이 있으면 —	when spring comes / if I have time	Oh, that clicks. 봄이 되면 is 'when spring comes' because spring is guaranteed. But 시간이 있으면 is 'if I have time,' because... honestly, maybe I won't.
하나의 형태, 상황에 맞는 의미 —	one form, meaning follows the situation	정확해요. 바로 그거예요. 형태는 하나, 의미는 상황을 따라가요.



Grammar / Structure Notes

-(으)면

-(으)면 — if / when (condition ending)

attaches to a verb or adjective stem

받침 없음 → -면 / 받침 있음 → -으면

받침 없음 → -면 / 받침 있음 → -으면 — vowel stem → 면 · consonant stem → 으면

규칙은 아주 간단해요. 받침이 없으면 -면, 받침이 있으면 -으면. If the stem ends in a vowel, add 면. If it ends in a consonant, add 으면.

시간이 있으면 가요

시간 + 이 + 있 + 으면 + 가 + 요 — If I have time, I go.

예문이에요. 시간이 있으면 가요. If I have time, I go. '있다'는 받침이 있으니까 으면.

봄이 되면 따뜻해요

봄 + 이 + 되 + 면 + 따뜻해 + 요 — When spring comes, it gets warm.

이번엔 봄이 되면 따뜻해요. When spring comes, it gets warm. '되다'는 받침이 없으니까 되면. And notice — here it feels like 'when,' not 'if.'

커피를 마시면 잠이 안 와요

커피 + 를 + 마시 + 면 + 잠 + 이 + 안 + 와 + 요 — If/when I drink coffee, I can't sleep.

하나 더요. 저는 커피를 마시면 잠이 안 와요. When I drink coffee, I can't sleep — a habit, a regular result. -(으)면 also covers those everyday patterns.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
시가니 이쓰면 가요	sigani isseumyeon gayo
시간이 있으면 가요	sigani isseumyeon gayo
있으면	isseumyeon
봄이 되면 따뜻해요	bomi doemyeon ttatteuthaeyo
되면	doemyeon

Self-Check

- 1 Say -(으)면 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
아서 / 어서 Saying 'Because' and 'And Then'	A2 Grammar: compare 아서 / 어서 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-CON-001
-더라도 / -(으)르더라도 Saying 'Even If' for Strong Concession	C1 Grammar: compare -더라도 / -(으)르더라도 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-GRAM-CON-001
는데 / Setting Up Background and Soft Contrast	B1 Grammar: compare 는데 / with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-GRAM-CON-001
(으)르 거예요 The Korean Future Tense and Plans	A2 Grammar: compare (으)르 거예요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-TNS-002

My Notes

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