



Korean Ladder Study Note

-지 않아요 / -지 못해요

The Long Negative Forms

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Grammar Negation	-지 않아요 / -지 못해요 The Long Negative Forms

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-NEG-001>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OmrBlvHT1Q>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. I already learned 안 먹어요 for 'I don't eat.' So why do I keep seeing 먹지 않아요 everywhere? Are those... the same thing?

Right, and there's a 못 version too. It feels like Korean has a short way and a long way, and nobody told us when to use which.

좋은 질문이에요. 한국어에는 부정하는 방법이 두 가지 있어요. In English, Korean has two ways to make a negative — a short way and a long way.

짧은 부정은 동사 앞에 안이나 못을 붙여요. 긴 부정은 동사 뒤에 -지 않거나 -지 못하드를 붙여요. The short one goes in front; the long one attaches to the back of the verb.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	준호 씨, 케이크 드세요. —	Junho, have some cake.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	고맙지만 저는 단 걸 먹지 않아요. —	Thanks, but I don't eat sweets.
Hana	그럼 커피는요? —	Then how about coffee?
Junho	요즘 잠을 못 자서 커피를 마시지 못해요. —	I haven't slept well lately, so I can't drink coffee.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
부정하는 방법이 두 가지 bujeonghaneun bangbeobi du gaji	two ways to make a negative	좋은 질문이에요. 한국어에는 부정하는 방법이 두 가지 있어요. In English, Korean has two ways to make a negative — a short way and a long way.
안 + 동사 / 동사 + -지 않다 an + dongsa / dongsa + -ji anta	'not' before the verb, or -지 않다 after the stem	짧은 부정은 동사 앞에 안이나 못을 붙여요. 긴 부정은 동사 뒤에 -지 않거나 -지 못하드를 붙여요. The short one goes in front; the long one attaches to the back of the verb.
안 먹어요 an meogeoyo	(I) don't eat	먼저 '안 먹어요'예요. This is the short negative — just put 안 in front of the verb. It's the everyday, spoken way.
먹지 않아요 meokji anayo	(I) don't eat · 먹다 → 먹지 않아요	이제 긴 부정이에요. 동사 어간에 -지 않아요를 붙여요. Take the verb 먹다, drop 다, and add -지 않아요.
안 먹어요 = 먹지 않아요 an meogeoyo = meokji anayo	same meaning · long form = slightly more formal/written	'안 먹어요'와 '먹지 않아요'는 뜻이 같아요. The meaning is the same — 'I don't eat.' 긴 형태가 조금 더 정중하고 글에서 자주 써요. The long form feels a little more formal and shows up more in writing.
저는 커피를 마시지 않아요 jeoneun keopireul masiji anayo	As for me, I don't drink coffee.	예문을 볼게요. 저는 커피를 마시지 않아요. I don't drink coffee. 그리고 하나 씨는 고기를 먹지 않아요.
가지 않아요 gaji anayo	(I) don't go · 가다 → 가지 않아요	가다도 해 볼게요. 안 가요, 또는 가지 않아요. Both mean 'don't go.' 어간 가에 -지 않아요만 붙이면 돼요.
어간 + 지 않아요 eogan + ji anayo	verb stem + 지 않아요 = long 'don't'	Oh, so the recipe is always the same — take the dictionary form, chop off 다, and glue on 지 않아요. Stem plus 지 않아요.



Grammar / Structure Notes

부정하는 방법이 두 가지

부정하는 방법이 두 가지 — two ways to make a negative

short: 안 / 못 · long: -지 않다 / -지 못하다

안 + 동사 / 동사 + -지 않다

안 + 동사 / 동사 + -지 않다 — 'not' before the verb, or -지 않다 after the stem

짧은 부정은 동사 앞에 안이나 못을 붙여요. 긴 부정은 동사 뒤에 -지 않거나 -지 못하드를 붙여요. The short one goes in front; the long one attaches to the back of the verb.

안 먹어요

안 먹어요 — (I) don't eat

short form — casual, spoken

먹지 않아요

먹 + 지 + 않아요 — (I) don't eat · 먹다 → 먹지 않아요

이제 긴 부정이에요. 동사 어간에 -지 않아요를 붙여요. Take the verb 먹다, drop 다, and add -지 않아요.

안 먹어요 = 먹지 않아요

안 먹어요 = 먹지 않아요 — same meaning · long form = slightly more formal/written

'안 먹어요'와 '먹지 않아요'는 뜻이 같아요. The meaning is the same — 'I don't eat.' 긴 형태가 조금 더 정중하고 글에서 자주 써요. The long form feels a little more formal and shows up more in writing.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
먹지 않아요	jeoneun gogireul meokji anayo
먹지 못해요	jeoneun maeun geol meokji motaeyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say -지 않아요 / -지 못해요 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
안 Two Ways to Say 'No/Can't'	A1 Grammar: compare 안 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-GRAM-NEG-001
(으)ㄹ 거예요 The Korean Future Tense and Plans	A2 Grammar: compare (으)ㄹ 거예요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-TNS-002
고 싶어요 Saying What You Want to Do	A2 Grammar: compare 고 싶어요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-END-001
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

My Notes

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