



Korean Ladder Study Note

아기

Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Pronunciation Consonants	아기 Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBPIAv0S_tg

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

I keep hearing 아기, but when I say it, I make it too sharp, like 아끼. Why does mine sound off?

The key is position. Word-start plain consonants can sound harder, but between vowel sounds they relax.

오늘의 핵심은 이것이에요. 모음 사이에서는 힘을 빼요. In English, let the middle consonant soften.

Important point: this is a sound rule, not a spelling change. You still write 기억, 디귤, 비읍, 지읒 the same way.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	고기 좋아하세요? —	Do you like meat?
Junho	네, 아버지도 고기를 좋아하세요. —	Yes, my father likes meat too.
Hana	그 부부도 같이 와요? —	Is that married couple coming too?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	네, 같이 와요. —	Yes, they are coming together.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
아기 agi	Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels	좋은 질문이에요. 아기는 가운데 기역이 모음 사이에 있어요, so it sounds closer to g, not a strong k.
모음 + ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ + 모음 mo-eum + consonant + mo-eum	Between vowels, plain consonants soften.	The key is position. Word-start plain consonants can sound harder, but between vowel sounds they relax.
모음 사이에서는 부드럽게 mo-eum sa-i-e-seo-neun bu-deu-reop-ge	Between vowels, say it gently.	오늘의 핵심은 이것이에요. 모음 사이에서는 힘을 빼요. In English, let the middle consonant soften.
고기 gogi	Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels	Compare 고기. The first 기역 begins the word, and the second 기역 sits between vowel sounds, so the second one is softer.
부부 bubu	Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels	Now listen to 비읍 in 부부. English speakers often make the second 부 too much like p, but Korean keeps it softer.
아버지 abeoji	Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels	Good. Now 지읎 in 아버지. The 지 is after a vowel sound, so it is closer to j than ch.
바다 bada	Why ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ Soften Between Vowels	For 디귤, listen to 바다. The 다 comes after a vowel, so it is softer than a hard English t.
글자는 그대로, 소리는 부드럽게 geul-ja-neun geu-dae-ro, so-ri-neun bu-deu-reop-ge	The spelling stays; the sound softens.	Important point: this is a sound rule, not a spelling change. You still write 기역, 디귤, 비읍, 지읎 the same way.



Grammar / Structure Notes

모음 + ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ + 모음

모음 + ㄱ/ㄷ/ㅂ/ㅈ + 모음 — Between vowels, plain consonants soften.

ㄱ, ㄷ, ㅂ, ㅈ often sound like g, d, b, j in the middle.

모음 사이에서는 부드럽게

모음 사이에서는 부드럽게 — Between vowels, say it gently.

Do not punch the middle consonant.

아기

아 + 기 — baby

맞아요. 아기에서 아는 모음으로 끝나고, 기는 모음으로 이어져요. 가운데 기억은 부드러워요.

고기

고 + 기 — meat

고기를 너무 세게 고기처럼 말하면 Korean ears hear extra force in the middle.

부부

부 + 부 — married couple

부부는 husband and wife, married couple. 가운데 비읍은 강하게 터뜨리지 않아요.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
아기	agi
고기	gogi
부부	bubu
아버지	abeoji
바다	bada
고기 좋아하세요?	gogi joahaseyo?

Self-Check

- 1 Say 아기 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
ㅅ Plain and Tense Sibilants	A2 Pronunciation: compare ㅅ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-001
감 / 꺾 / 캬 Telling Apart ㄱ, ㅋ, and ㆁ in Real Words	A2 Pronunciation: compare 감 / 꺾 / 캬 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-PRON-CNS-002
ㄷ / ㅌ / ㅍ The Three Korean D/T Sounds	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㄷ / ㅌ / ㅍ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-006
ㄹ 발음 The Korean R/L Sound at the Start and Middle of Words	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㄹ 발음 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-CNS-002

My Notes

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