



Korean Ladder Study Note

음 / 그러니까 / 뭐랄까

Sounding Natural with Korean Fillers

Level	Topic	Focus
B1 · Intermediate TOPIK 3	Colloquial Fillers & Reactions	음 / 그러니까 / 뭐랄까 Sounding Natural with Korean Fillers

Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-COLLOQ-FIL-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-COLLOQ-FIL-001>

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

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

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

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Core Idea

Okay, real talk — when I'm thinking mid-sentence in Korean, I just freeze. Dead silence. It feels so awkward.

Same. In English I'd say 'um' or 'like' or 'I mean.' But in Korean I've got nothing, so I just stop.

이게 정말 흔한 고민이에요. The silence isn't the problem — it's that you're missing the little words that buy you time.

Today's three tools: 음, 그러니까, and 뭐랄까. Native speakers use these constantly without even noticing.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	주말에 뭐 했어요? —	What did you do this weekend?
Junho	음, 그러니까, 친구를 만났는데, 뭐랄까, 좀 바빴어요. —	Um, so, I met a friend, but... how do I put it... it was kind of busy.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	아, 바쁜 주말이었네요. —	Ah, a busy weekend, then.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
음 / 그러니까 / 뭐랄까 eum / geureonikka / mworalkka	um / so, I mean / how do I put it	Today's three tools: 음, 그러니까, and 뭐랄까. Native speakers use these constantly without even noticing.
음... eum...	um... (thinking)	First, 음. It's the simplest one — it's just 'um.' You say it while your brain catches up.
그러니까... geureonikka...	so... / I mean... / what I'm saying is...	Next, 그러니까. Literally it means 'because of that,' but as a filler it's 'so...' or 'I mean...'
뭐랄까... mworalkka...	how should I put it... / what's the word...	And third, 뭐랄까. This one's my favorite — it means 'how should I put it?' It's perfect when you're searching for the right word.
그러니까 geureonikka	Sounding Natural with Korean Fillers	좋아요. One small fix — don't stress 그러니까 too hard. Let it glide: 그러니까. Light and quick.
뭐랄까 mworalkka	Sounding Natural with Korean Fillers	완벽해요. The pause around 뭐랄까 is exactly right — that little gap is doing the work.
음 (O) / uh (X) eum (O)	Use 음, not English 'uh'	그게 바로 흔한 실수예요. An English 'uh' breaks the spell. Swap it for 음 and your whole sentence stays Korean.



Grammar / Structure Notes

음 / 그러니까 / 뭐랄까

음 / 그러니까 / 뭐랄까 — um / so, I mean / how do I put it

Three buying-time fillers

음...

음... — um... (thinking)

A pure hesitation sound

음...

음... — um... — a beat to breathe

Use it at the very start of a reply

그러니까...

그러니까... — so... / I mean... / what I'm saying is...

Use it to restate or clarify

그러니까...

그러니까... — I'm about to restate this more clearly

Restart and clarify

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
음, 그러니까, 잘 모르겠어요	eum, geureonikka, jal moreugesseoyo.
그러니까	geureonikka
그 단어가, 뭐랄까, 기억이 안 나요	geu daneoga, mworalkka, gieogi an nayo.
...뭐랄까...	mworalkka

Self-Check

- 1 Say 음 / 그러니까 / 뭐랄까 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
글썩요 / 그러게요 / 아무튼 Hedging and Agreeing Naturally	A2 Colloquial: compare 글썩요 / 그러게요 / 아무튼 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-COLLOQ-FIL-001
네 / 아니요 / 맞아요 Natural Korean Reactions	A1 Colloquial: compare 네 / 아니요 / 맞아요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-COLLOQ-FIL-001
ㅇㅋ / ㄱㄱ / ㅋㅋ Reading Korean Text and Chat Abbreviations	B1 Colloquial: compare ㅇㅋ / ㄱㄱ / ㅋㅋ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-COLLOQ-TXT-001
그럼 / 근데 / 그치 Spoken Shortcuts for 그러면 · 그런데 · 그렇지	B1 Colloquial: compare 그럼 / 근데 / 그치 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-COLLOQ-CTR-001

My Notes

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