



## Korean Ladder Study Note

# -고 있다 / -아 있다

## Ongoing Actions vs Resulting States

| Level                        | Topic            | Focus  |
|------------------------------|------------------|--|
| B1 · Intermediate<br>TOPIK 3 | Grammar<br>Tense | -고 있다 / -아 있다<br>Ongoing Actions vs Resulting States |

## Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdLAW1sOF-U>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

## Core Idea

Okay, real question. 'She's sitting.' Do I say 앉고 있어요, or 앉아 있어요? They both have 앉다 in there, so what's the difference?

좋은 질문이에요. 둘 다 맞는 말이지만, 뜻이 완전히 달라요. 하나는 진행, 하나는 상태예요.

먼저 -고 있다. -고 있다 표시해요 진행을. In English, it marks an action in progress — you're in the middle of doing it right now.

그리고 -아/어 있다. 이건 상태예요 — the action already finished, and the result stays. In English, it marks the state that remains after the action.

## Conversation Snapshot

| Speaker | Korean                     | Meaning  |
|---------|----------------------------|--|
| Junho   | 어, 민수 씨 왔어요? 지금 뭐 해요?<br>— | Oh, you're here? What are you doing right now? |



| Speaker | Korean                         | Meaning  |
|---------|--------------------------------|--|
| Hana    | 저기 창가에 앉아 있어요. 책을 읽고 있어요.<br>— | I'm seated over by the window. I'm reading a book. |
| Junho   | 불이 꺼져 있는데, 안 어두워요?<br>—        | The light is off — isn't it dark?                  |
| Hana    | 아, 지금 켜고 있어요.<br>—             | Ah, I'm turning it on right now.                   |

## Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

| Word  | Meaning   | Example  |
|---|---|--|
| -고 있다<br>-go itda                                   | be in the middle of (doing)                           | 먼저 -고 있다. -고 있다 표시해요 진행을. In English, it marks an action in progress — you're in the middle of doing it right now.   |
| -아/어 있다<br>-a/eo itda                               | a state that remains after the action                 | 그리고 -아/어 있다. 이걸 상태예요 — the action already finished, and the result stays. In English, it marks the state that remains after the action.                        |
| -고 있다 = 진행 · -아/어 있다 = 상태<br>—                      | in progress vs the leftover state                     | So one is 'it's happening right now,' and the other is 'it already happened and it's still like that.' Got it.   |
| 책을 읽고 있어요<br>chaegeul ilkko isseoyo                 | I'm reading a book (right now).                       | 예를 들어, 저는 지금 책을 읽고 있어요. I'm reading a book right now — the action is happening as we speak.  |
| 앉고 있어요<br>ankko isseoyo                             | is in the middle of sitting down (still moving)       | 이제 앉다로 볼게요. 앉고 있어요 — 지금 앉는 중이에요. It means you're in the middle of lowering yourself into the chair. Still moving.  |
| 앉아 있어요<br>anja isseoyo                              | is seated (the state stays)                           | 그런데 앉아 있어요는 달라요. 앉는 동작은 끝났고, 지금은 앉은 상태예요. You already sat down, and now you're simply seated. That's the state that stays.                                     |
| 앉고 있어요 ↔ 앉아 있어요<br>—                                | lowering into the chair vs already seated             | Oh, that's the trap. 앉고 있어요 is the movement of sitting down, but 앉아 있어요 is already parked in the chair.  |
| 일어서고 있어요 ↔ 서 있어요<br>ireoseogo isseoyo / seo isseoyo | standing up (in progress) vs already standing (state) | 여기서 조심하세요. 서다는 짧은 동작이라서, 그냥 서고 있어요는 조금 어색해요. 올라오는 동작은 일어서다를 써요 — 일어서고 있어요. 이미 서 있으면 서 있어요. So 일어서고 있어요 is coming up onto your feet; 서 있어요 is already standing. |



## Grammar / Structure Notes

### -고 있다

-고 있다 — be in the middle of (doing)

action in progress

### -아/어 있다

-아/어 있다 — a state that remains after the action

resulting state

### -고 있다 = 진행 · -아/어 있다 = 상태

-고 있다 = 진행 · -아/어 있다 = 상태 — in progress vs the leftover state

So one is 'it's happening right now,' and the other is 'it already happened and it's still like that.' Got it.

### 책을 읽고 있어요

책 + 을 + 읽고 + 있어요 — I'm reading a book (right now).

예를 들어, 저는 지금 책을 읽고 있어요. I'm reading a book right now — the action is happening as we speak.

### 앉고 있어요

앉고 + 있어요 — is in the middle of sitting down (still moving)

이제 앉다로 볼게요. 앉고 있어요 — 지금 앉는 중이에요. It means you're in the middle of lowering yourself into the chair. Still moving.

## Pronunciation Loop

| Phrase    | How to practice       |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 앉아 있어요    | anja isseoyo          |
| 불이 켜져 있어요 | buri kyeojyeo isseoyo |

## Self-Check

- 1 Say -고 있다 / -아 있다 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   |
|--|--|--|
| (으)ㄹ 거예요<br>The Korean Future Tense and Plans          | A2 Grammar: compare (으)ㄹ 거예요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.         | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-TNS-002">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-TNS-002</a> |
| 았어요 / 었어요<br>The Korean Past Tense                     | A2 Grammar: compare 았어요 / 었어요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.        | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-TNS-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-GRAM-TNS-001</a> |
| -네요 / -군요 / -잖아요<br>Reacting, Realizing, and Reminding | B1 Grammar: compare -네요 / -군요 / -잖아요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer. | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-GRAM-END-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-GRAM-END-001</a> |
| 관형형<br>Turning Verbs into Modifiers                    | B1 Grammar: compare 관형형 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.              | Open lesson<br><a href="https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-GRAM-MOD-001">https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-GRAM-MOD-001</a> |

## My Notes

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