



Korean Ladder Study Note

되어

Vowel Contractions in Speech

Level	Topic	Focus
B1 · Intermediate TOPIK 3	Pronunciation Vowels	되어 Vowel Contractions in Speech

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

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

Watch the full video on YouTube

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

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. I keep seeing 돼요 sometimes and 되요 other times. Which one is right, and why do they look so different?

그건 아주 좋은 질문이에요. That's the perfect question, because the answer is one small rule about vowels squeezing together.

In fast speech, two vowels next to each other often merge into one. Korean writes that merge down, and that's what we call a contraction.

오늘의 핵심 패턴이에요. Here is the pattern — 되어 becomes 돼. The 어 folds into 되 and you get a single syllable.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	이거 먹어 봐. —	Try eating this.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	지금 먹어도 돼요? —	Can I eat it now?
Junho	응, 해 봐. 맛있어. —	Yeah, go for it. It's good.
Hana	와, 진짜 맛있네요. —	Wow, it really is good.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
되어 → 돼 doeeo → dwae	"become" — full form contracts to one syllable	오늘의 핵심 패턴이에요. Here is the pattern — 되어 becomes 돼. The 어 folds into 되 and you get a single syllable.
보아 → 봐 boa → bwa	"look/see" — 보 + 아 merge	The same thing happens with 보아 becoming 봐. 보 plus 아 merges into 봐 — "look, see."
하여 → 해 hayeo → hae	"do" — irregular contraction	그리고 하여 becomes 해. This one's a little special — 하여 turns into 해, our everyday "do."
하다 → 해 hada → hae	irregular: 하 takes 여, then 하여 → 해	정확해요. 하다 is an irregular verb, so its ending is 여, not 아. And 하여 always contracts to 해 in speech. You'll almost never say the full 하여 out loud.
집에 가도 돼요 jibe gado dwaeyo	You may go home	Let me show you a real sentence. 이제 집에 가도 돼요. In English — you may go home now.
되어요 = 돼요 doeeoyo = dwaeyo	both correct; 돼요 is the spoken norm	여기 돼요 is 되어요 contracted. The full form 되어요 is correct too, but in speech everyone says 돼요.
돼 ← 되어 dwae ← doeeo	Stretch test: can it become 되어? Then it's 돼	맞아요. Now here's the key test for spelling. If you can stretch it back into 되어, then the contraction is 돼 with the vowel ㅞ.
안 돼요 an dwaeyo	No / that's not allowed	So 안 돼요 — "no, you can't" — expands to 안 되어요. That's why it's 돼요, not 되요.



Grammar / Structure Notes

되어 → 돼

되어 → 돼 — "become" — full form contracts to one syllable

되 + 어 → 돼

보아 → 봐

보아 → 봐 — "look/see" — 보 + 아 merge

보 + 아 → 봐

하여 → 해

하여 → 해 — "do" — irregular contraction

하 + 여 → 해

하다 → 해

하다 → 해 — irregular: 하 takes 여, then 하여 → 해

written 하여 survives only in formal/literary style

집에 가도 돼요

집 + 에 + 가도 + 돼요 — You may go home

Let me show you a real sentence. 이제 집에 가도 돼요. In English — you may go home now.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
머거도 돼요	meogeodo dwaeyo?
돼요	dwaeyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 되어 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
ㅏ The Two Open Vowels Beginners Blur	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅏ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-006
ㅗ The Vowels That Now Sound the Same	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅗ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-002
ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅛ / ㅠ The 'Y' Glide Vowels	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅓ / ㅕ / ㅛ / ㅠ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-004
ㅜ The Vowels English Speakers Mix Up	A1 Pronunciation: compare ㅜ with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-PRON-VOW-001

My Notes

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