

LEVEL 1 LESSON 16

In this lesson, we are going to learn how to **conjugate** Korean verbs.

When you look up verbs in a Korean dictionary, they are in this form:

가다 [ga-da] = to go

먹다 [meok-da] = to eat

자다 [ja-da] = to sleep

때리다 [ttae-ri-da] = to hit

웃다 [ut-da] = to laugh

And when you change the forms of these verbs to express the present tense, the future tense, the past tense, and etc., the **first thing** you need to do is to drop the last letter, **다** [da], and then you have the verb stem.

Verb stems of the verbs above:

가 [ga]

먹 [meok]

자 [ja]

때리 [ttae-ri]

웃 [ut]

And to these, you add the appropriate verb endings to make them complete. And in this lesson we are going to learn how to change these dictionary forms of the verbs into the **present tense**.

The Present Tense

In order to conjugate a verb into the present tense, you take the verb stem, and add one of these endings:

아요 [a-yo]

어요 [eo-yo]

여요 [yeo-yo]

****** Note that we are introducing the endings in the **polite language**. Do not worry about learning to use different politeness levels. Once you have learned how to say everything in polite language, changing it to other politeness levels is very easy to do.
So, which one of these three endings goes after which verb stem?
It's quite simple.

If the verb stem's last vowel is **ㅏ** [a] or **ㅓ** [o], it is followed by **아요** [a-yo].

If the last vowel is **NOT** ㅏ [a] or ㅓ [o], it is followed by **어요** [eo-yo].

And only one verb stem, which is **하** [ha], is followed by **여요** [yeo-yo].

Let's look at some examples.

1)

가다 [ga-da] = to go

The verb stem is **가** [ga] and its last vowel is **ㅏ** [a] so you add **아요** [a-yo].

So it first becomes 가ㅏ + 아요, and then more naturally, it becomes **가요** [ga-yo] for ease of pronunciation.

가다 [ga-da] = to go (dictionary form)

--> 가요 [ga-yo] = I go. You go. He goes. She goes. They go. (present tense)

2)

먹다 [meok-da] = to eat

The verb stem is **먹** [meok] and its level vowel is **ㅓ** [eo] so it is NOT ㅏ or ㅓ, so you add

어요 [eo-yo].

So it becomes, **먹 + 어요** [meo-geo-yo]

먹다 [meok-da] = to eat (dictionary form)

먹어요 [meo-geo-yo] = I eat. You eat., and etc. (present tense)

****** Note that there is a liaison in the pronunciation at 먹 + 어 [meok + eo] which sounds like 머거 [meo-geo].

3)

보다 [bo-da] = to see, to watch, to look

Verb stem? 보 [bo]

What is it followed by? **아요** [a-yo]

보 + 아요 ---> Over time, it started being pronounced and written as **봐요** [bwa-yo].

(Say 보 + 아 + 요 three times as fast.)

보다 [bo-da] = to see, to watch, to look

봐요 [bwa-yo] = I see. I look. I watch. You look. and etc. (present tense)

4)

보이다 [bo-i-da] = to be seen, to be visible

Verb stem? **보이** [bo-i]

What is it followed by? 어요 [eo-yo]

보이 + 어요 ---> **보여요** [bo-yeo-yo]

보이다 [bo-i-da] = to be seen, to be visible

보여요 [bo-yeo-yo] = It's visible. I see it.

5)

하다 [ha-da] = to do

Verb stem? 하 [ha]

What is it followed by? **여요** [yeo-yo]

하 + 여요 ---> **하여요** [ha-yeo-yo]

Over time, 하여요 became **해요** [hae-yo].

****** Here, please just remember that this verb, 하다 is very versatile. You can add a noun in front of it and you can form new verbs. We will introduce how to do this in lesson number 23. But for now, just remember that 하다 becomes 해요 in the present tense and it means “I do.” “You do.” “He does.” or “They do.”

Are there any irregularities or exceptions?

Sadly, yes, there are. But don't worry. Even those exceptions are NOT too far away from the regular rules!! And of course, we will introduce them in the nicest and easiest way possible through our future lessons. Thank you once again for studying with us through this lesson!