KR

KOREAN LESSON

Korean Grammar 2 · Chapter 4 · Tenses and Aspect

⏳ Tenses and Aspect — 시제와 상

__Tense__ (__시제__) says when something happens; __aspect__ (__상__) says how it unfolds: in progress, finished with a result that remains, or remembered from the past. Korean marks tense with suffixes on the stem (-았/었-, -겠-) and builds aspect with helper verbs (있다) and extra endings (-던, -(으)ㄴ 지). Here the forms are grouped by what they let you say. The stems use the changes from Chapter 3, so check a stem there if a form looks odd.

> THE TENSE MAP
>
> **Past** -았/었- · **Past, now cut off** -았/었었- · **Future / plan** -(으)ㄹ 거예요 · **On-the-spot guess or will** -겠- · **In progress** -고 있다 · **Resulting state** -아/어 있다 · **Remembered / habitual past** -던 · **Time since** -(으)ㄴ 지.

1. The past: -았/었-

You know the forms from Korean Grammar 1: -았- after ㅏ or ㅗ in the last stem vowel, -었- after other vowels, and -했- for 하다. It covers the simple past and the "present perfect": **밥 먹었어요?** means both "Did you eat?" and "Have you eaten?", and **민수는 벌써 집에 갔어요** "Minsu has already gone home". Adjectives take it too: **어제는 추웠어요** "It was cold yesterday". Irregular stems follow Chapter 3: **들었어요**, **몰랐어요**, **바빴어요**.

The honorific -(으)시- sits *before* the tense marker (Chapter 2): **드셨어요**, **가셨어요**.

2. The past, now cut off: -았/었었-

Doubling the marker gives a past situation that is **over**, reversed or no longer holding. It is not the English "had done" for plain anteriority. **서울에서 일 년 살았었어요** says you lived in Seoul for a year, and (the form implies) you do not live there now. **미국에 갔었어요** can mean "I went to the U.S. (and have since come back)". Compare **미국에 갔어요**, which on its own says only that the going happened.

Use -았/었었- when the contrast with now matters; if it does not, the plain -았/었- is the normal choice, and learners who put -았/었었- on everything sound odd.

3. The future: -(으)ㄹ 거예요

Attach **-ㄹ 거예요** to a vowel stem and **-을 거예요** to a consonant stem. ㄹ-stems keep the ㄹ and add only 거예요: **살 거예요**. Irregular stems change first (Chapter 3): **추울 거예요**, **들을 거예요**, **지을 거예요**, **쓸 거예요**, **부를 거예요**. It covers **plans** and expectations: **이번 방학에 유럽에 갈 거예요** "I'm going to Europe this vacation". For a more formal register use **-(으)ㄹ 겁니다**: **갈 겁니다**. With 이다: **학생일 거예요** "(they) will be / must be a student".

Korean often uses the plain present with a time word for a firm plan: **내일 가요** "I'm going tomorrow".

4. On-the-spot will and guess: -겠-

The suffix -겠- attaches directly to the stem, before the ending. It leans toward **conjecture from what you see now**, **willingness** and **immediate intention**, where -(으)ㄹ 거예요 leans toward a planned or expected future.

USE	EXAMPLE	MEANING
Conjecture	**하늘을 보니 곧 비가 오겠어요.**	Looking at the sky, it's going to rain soon.
Conjecture	**맛있겠어요.**	That looks tasty.
Willingness	**제가 하겠습니다.**	I'll do it.
Plan	**이번 방학에 유럽에 갈 거예요.**	I'm going to Europe this vacation. (not -겠-)
Frozen phrase	**알겠습니다.** / **모르겠어요.**	Understood. / I don't know.
Frozen phrase	**잘 먹겠습니다.**	Thank you for the meal. (said before eating)

In a question, -겠- asks about the listener's will or a polite offer: **뭐 드시겠어요?** "What will you have?" (Chapter 2's 드시다). Be careful with your own plans: **갈 거예요** is the usual way to report a plan, and **가겠어요** sounds like a decision made just now.

> **Watch out: 알겠습니다 is not "I will know"**
>
> The phrases 알겠습니다, 모르겠어요 and 잘 먹겠습니다 are learned as wholes. 알겠어요 / 알겠습니다 is the polite "OK, understood" you say when given an instruction.

5. In progress: -고 있다

Stem + **-고 있다** is "be doing": **지금 밥을 먹고 있어요** "I'm eating right now". It takes any tense: **먹고 있었어요** "was eating", **먹고 있을 거예요** "will be eating". Korean uses the plain present more than English uses "-ing" in many contexts, so do not add -고 있다 to everything; use it when the "in the middle of" idea matters. For an honoured subject the 있다 becomes 계시다 (Chapter 2): **선생님은 책을 읽고 계세요** "The teacher is reading a book".

6. A state that remains: -아/어 있다

With **intransitive** verbs of change, **-아/어 있다** describes the state left behind by a completed action: **문이 열려 있어요** "The door is (standing) open", **의자에 앉아 있어요** "(someone) is seated on the chair". Compare:

FORM	EXAMPLE	MEANING
-고 있다	**앉고 있어요**	is in the act of sitting down
-아/어 있다	**앉아 있어요**	is seated (already sat down)

Other common verbs: **서 있다** (be standing), **누워 있다** (be lying), **켜져 있다** (be on), **닫혀 있다** (be closed). The honorific uses 계시다: **앉아 계세요**. For verbs of wearing (입다, 신다, 쓰다), Korean uses -고 있다 for the resulting state: **모자를 쓰고 있어요** "(they) are wearing a hat". This last point is general knowledge, not from the sources checked for this chapter.

7. The remembered past: -던 and -았/었던

Before a noun, the past modifier -(으)ㄴ says the action was **finished**, while -던 says it was **in progress, habitual or left unfinished**, as remembered. Compare: **다 마신 커피 잔은 여기 두세요** "Put the coffee cups you've finished here" and **마시던 커피는 그대로 두세요** "Leave the

coffee you were drinking as it is". The rule of thumb: if you can say "used to" or "was -ing" in English, use -던.

FORM	EXAMPLE	MEANING
-(으)ㄴ	**먹은 밥**	the rice I ate (completed)
-던	**먹던 밥**	the rice I was eating / used to eat
-았/었던	**먹었던 밥**	the rice I ate (that time, now recalled and done with)

More examples: **우리가 자주 가던 카페가 문을 닫았어요** "The café we used to go to a lot has closed down"; **예전에 살았던 동네에 오랜만에 가 봤어요** "I visited the neighbourhood I used to live in, for the first time in ages". Unlike -(으)ㄴ, -던 does not change after a vowel or consonant stem: **가던**, **만들던**, **먹던**, while the -(으)ㄴ forms are 간, 만든 and 먹은. Modifiers in general come in Chapter 7.

8. Time since: -(으)ㄴ 지

Verb stem + **-(으)ㄴ 지**, then a length of time, then **됐어요** (or **지났어요**), says how long it has been since something happened: **한국어를 배운 지 일 년이 됐어요** "It's been a year since I started learning Korean". Use -ㄴ 지 after a vowel stem or ㄹ-stem (**산 지**, **만든 지**) and -은 지 after a consonant stem (**먹은 지**). The 지 is a separate word, so leave a space before it. A long gap works the same way: **만난 지 오래됐어요** "It's been a long time since we met". It is for verbs, not adjectives. The forms and examples in this section come from general knowledge, not from the sources checked for this chapter.

9. Experience: -(으)ㄴ 적이 있다 / 없다

Verb stem + **-(으)ㄴ 적이 있다** says "I have (ever) done it"; **-(으)ㄴ 적이 없다** says "I have never done it". Use -ㄴ after a vowel or ㄹ stem and -은 after a consonant stem: **한국에 간 적이 있어요** "I have been to Korea", **김치를 만든 적이 없어요** "I have never made kimchi". The question is **먹어 본 적이 있어요?** "Have you ever tried eating it?" (본 = 보다 "try", the same helper as -아/어 보다). Compare -(으)ㄴ 지, which counts time since; 적 is the "occasion" itself. This section is from general knowledge, not from the sources checked for this chapter.

Watch out: the 있다 aspects with irregulars and honorifics

-고 있다 uses the bare stem, so there is no irregular change: **듣고 있어요**, **춥고 있어요** is not used because adjectives do not take it. An honoured subject needs 계시다: **주무시고 계세요** "is sleeping".

🗣️ In Use — 실제 예문

① Plans (past and future)

A:

어제 뭐 했어요? 내일은 뭐 할 거예요?

What did you do yesterday? What will you do tomorrow?

B:

어제는 집에 있었어요. 내일은 친구를 만날 거예요.

I was at home yesterday. I'm meeting a friend tomorrow.

② On the phone (progressive)

A:

지금 뭐 하고 있어요?

What are you doing now?

B:

저는 음악을 듣고 있어요. 아버지는 앉아 계세요.

I'm listening to music. My father is sitting down.

③ Time and memory

A:

서울에서 산 지 얼마나 됐어요?

How long has it been since you started living in Seoul?

B:

이 년 됐어요. 전에는 부산에서 살았었어요.

Two years. I used to live in Busan before (and no longer do).

📋 Quick Reference — 요약표

FORM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
-았/었-	past; present perfect	**먹었어요**
-았/었었-	past, now over	**살았었어요**
-(으)ㄹ 거예요	plan; expectation	**갈 거예요**
-겠-	on-the-spot guess or will	**맛있겠어요**
-고 있다	in progress	**먹고 있어요**
-아/어 있다	resulting state	**앉아 있어요**
-던	remembered / habitual past (modifier)	**가던 카페**
-(으)ㄴ 적이 있다	experience	**간 적이 있어요**
-(으)ㄴ 지 … 됐어요	time since	**배운 지 일 년 됐어요**

🖍️ Try It Yourself — 연습

Work out the answer first, then click to check.

1. Put into the past: **춥다**, **듣다**, **바쁘다** (해요체).

▼ Show answer

추웠어요 · **들었어요** · **바빴어요**

2. Say "I'm going to cook tomorrow" and "I'm going to live in Seoul" (-(으)ㄹ 거예요; 만들다 and 살다).

▼ Show answer

내일 만들 거예요. · **서울에서 살 거예요.** (ㄹ-stems keep the ㄹ and add only 거예요.)

3. Which suits better, -겠- or -(으)ㄹ 거예요: "It looks delicious!" and "I'm going to Jeju in July"?

▼ Show answer

맛있겠어요! (-겠-, a guess from what you see) · **7월에 제주도에 갈 거예요.** (a plan)

4. Say "The door is open" and "I'm reading a book now".

▼ Show answer

문이 열려 있어요. · **지금 책을 읽고 있어요.**

5. Give the honorific 해요체 of "My grandfather is sleeping" (**주무시다** + -고 있다).

▼ Show answer

할아버지는 주무시고 계세요.

6. Choose -(으)ㄴ or -던: "the book I finished" and "the song I used to sing as a child".

▼ Show answer

다 읽은 책 (finished) · **어릴 때 부르던 노래** (habitual, in the past)

7. Say "It's been two years since I started working" (일하다).

▼ Show answer

일한 지 이 년 됐어요.

8. What is the difference between **부산에 갔어요** and **부산에 갔었어요**?

▼ Show answer

The first simply says you went to Busan. The second suggests the trip is over and no longer relevant, for example that you went and came back.

Coming up in Chapter 5: Connecting Clauses 1: And, But, So. Joining two clauses with -고, -지만, -(으)ㄴ/는데, -아/어서, -(으)니까, -(으)면, -거나 and -(으)ㄹ 때, and the contrast between the two "because" endings, -아/어서 and -(으)니까.