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Chapter 1

Korean in a Nutshell

Welcome to the exciting world of *Korean For Dummies*! Whether you're a die-hard fan of K-pop and K-dramas or completely new to Korean culture, you're now taking the first step towards acquiring a new 언어 (uh-nuh) (*language*). Learning a 외국어 (wae-goo-guh) (*foreign language*) is intellectually challenging, but the rewards it brings are boundless. It unlocks pathways to forging new connections with people, cultures, and communities in ways you've never imagined. As you delve deeper into the language, you'll uncover the intricate relationship between language and culture, further enhancing your understanding and appreciation of both.

In this “nutshell” chapter, we offer you a sneak peek into what lies ahead in the rest of this book. Prepare to immerse yourself in the beauty of 한국어 (hahn-goo-guh) (*Korean language*) and 문화 (moon-hwah) (*culture*). So, ready to dive in and give it your all? Let's go!

Unraveling the Depths of Korean

When first dipping your toes into the Korean language, it's a good idea to start by familiarizing yourself with 한글 (hahn-geul) (*Hangeul*), the Korean alphabet, and its pronunciation. Understanding grammar is another crucial part when learning

any 외국어 (wae-goo-guh) (*foreign language*). Along with these fundamentals, you'll also enjoy learning a selection of simple yet engaging Korean phrases that you can begin using immediately.

Discovering Korean script and sounds

Ever wondered how 한국어 (hahn-goo-guh) (*Korean language*) and 영어 (yuhng-uh) (*English*) share a similarity in their script? Just like English, 한글 (hahn-geul) (*Hangeul*), the Korean alphabet, notates both vowels and consonants. With 40 letters in total, 21 represent 모음 (moh-eum) (*vowels*) and 19 stand for 자음 (jah-eum) (*consonants*), each with a direct 1:1 sound match. Learning 한글 is a wise first step if you want to learn 한국어 quickly. It will open doors to a wealth of information, accelerating your journey to fluency.

For those curious about the nitty-gritty details, Chapter 2 awaits. There, we meticulously introduce each letter and its sound, unveiling the art behind constructing the syllable blocks that form words.

Getting a grip on basic grammar

문법 (moon-ppuhp) (*grammar*) is often thought of as a “glue” that holds words together. The order in which you “glue” your words together can create sentences with totally different meanings.

A BRIEF JOURNEY TO HANGEUL HISTORY

한글 (hahn-geul) (*Hangeul*), the Korean alphabet, was developed in 1443 by King 세종 (seh-johng) (*Sejong*), who is revered as Korea's most respected king, pretty much an icon in Korean history. His motivation behind creating 한글 was to devise a written system that the commoners could easily master.

한글 stands out globally as one of the rare languages with its creation story on record — who made it, for whom, why, and how. Pretty unique! Fast forward to today, 한글 is basically the backbone of all written communication in Korea, boosting the country to one of the top spots for literacy worldwide. Thanks to King 세종, 한글 has woven itself into the fabric of Korean culture and identity, becoming something people hold dear every single day. (For more on the story behind 한글, check out Chapter 2.)

Korean 문법 is *different* (not *difficult*, mind you) from English. Most distinctively, word order is different. The natural order of an English sentence is subject-verb-object, and, unlike Korean, English is much stricter in the word order. For example, in the popular TV drama “Friends,” Rachel and Ross argued about who was the “dump-er” and who was the “dump-ee” in their breakup. To them, the sentences “Ross dumped Rachel” and “Rachel dumped Ross” would each garner a very different response, even though all we did was switch two words. As another example, think about the sentence “The dog bit the thief” versus “The thief bit the dog.” The order of the words makes a big difference in the meaning of each sentence.

However, even if you switch places for Rachel and Ross, or the dog and the thief, in these sentences, the meaning can still remain the same in Korean. “Impossible!” you may think. But it is possible, thanks to a small tag-like element called a “particle” that marks the grammatical role of the words in the sentence. The concept of grammar particles may be new to you, but don’t let the new parts of Korean grammar intimidate you.

For more details and an introduction to simple Korean grammar, from the basic parts of speech to how to form sentences, read Chapter 3.

Starting a simple conversation

When meeting someone new, your conversation becomes much more engaging and welcoming if you can greet them in their language. Here are a few of the easiest and shortest phrases:

- » 네 (neh) (*Yes*)
- » 아니요 (ah-nee-yoh) (*No*)
- » 안녕하세요 (ahn-nyuhng-hah-seh-yoh) (*Hello*)
- » 고맙습니다 (goh-mahp-sseum-nee-dah) (*Thank you*)
- » 저기요 (juh-gee-yoh) (*Excuse me; hey*) This is an attention getter. Use it when you need to catch someone’s eye, like in a restaurant to call over the waiter, when a passerby drops their wallet in front of you, or even when someone cuts in line.

Chapter 4 shows numerous basic Korean expressions that enable you to start speaking Korean immediately (and politely).

Counting in Korean

숫자 (soot-jjah) (*numbers*) are everywhere in life. Countless activities involve numbers — telling 시간 (shee-gahn) (*time*) and 나이 (nah-ee) (*age*), counting 돈 (dohn) (*money*), calculating 가격 (gah-gyuhk) (*price*), discussing 가족 (gah-johk) (*family*), and countless more.

Korean has two 숫자 sets of cardinal numbers: native-Korean and Sino-Korean. Native Korean numbers are used for counting “how many,” and Sino numbers are used for other purposes, like money, math, and labeling. Don’t be intimidated by 숫자! With the guidance in Chapter 5, you’ll get a handle on numbers in Korean and will be up to speed on all these tasks.

Speaking Korean around the house

집 (jeep) (*house*) is where most of your days begin and end, making it crucial to know the words used around your 집. As you move through your 집 or enter a 방 (bahng) (*room*), try to recall the Korean words for various areas, such as 거실 (guh-sheel) (*living room*), 부엌 (boo-uhk) (*kitchen*), or 화장실 (hwah-jahng-sheel) (*restroom*).

Chapter 6 acquaints you with homey words for common rooms, household items, and regular everyday activities you do at home such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and doing chores that are essential for daily life at home.

Using Korean in Social Scenarios

Learning a 외국어 (wae-goo-guh) (*foreign language*) is all about connecting with people and communities outside of your comfort zone. Part 2 comes in handy in a lot of life scenarios: making small talk with new acquaintances; handling banking and payment, eating out, acquainting yourself with the diverse array of 한국 음식 (hahn-gook eum-sheek) (*Korean foods*), mastering the art of shopping, and exploring the town, communicating effectively at 직장 (jeek-jjahng) (*work*) and 학교 (hahk-kkyoh) (*school*), and more.

When learning a 외국어, one thing that gets you speaking it early on is conversational phrases. Instead of focusing on grammar points and speculating about why the language works the way it does, we’ll jump right in to show you how it works firsthand. The following chapters highlight everyday words and phrases in Korean social settings.

Building connections

You'll find it easier to connect with the world around you when you make an effort to speak the language of your new 친구 (cheen-goo) (*friends*) or 동료 (dohng-nyoh) (*colleagues, business associates*).

Chapter 7 guides you through initiating conversations with folks in Korean. You'll learn key words and phrases that you can use during quick chats, impressing those around you as you discuss topics like 고향 (goh-hyahng) (*hometown*), 직업 (jee-guhp) (*jobs*), 가족 (gah-johk) (*family*), and more.



TIP

When meeting someone from Korea, don't be surprised if they ask about your 나이 (nah-ee) (*age*). As you may know, 한국어 (hahn-goo-guh) (*the Korean language*) is an honorific language and 나이 is an important factor in determining how to address people. But, don't worry! Chapter 7 has some alternative ways to respond to age-related questions without giving away your exact age.

Making cents of money

돈 (dohn) (*money*) is a must-have for various aspects of life, including 여행 (yuh-haeng) (*traveling*), 쇼핑 (shyoh-peeng) (*shopping*), 외식 (wae-sheek) (*eating out*), and countless other activities. This is particularly true when journeying through a 외국 (wae-gook) (*foreign country*), where familiarity with handling foreign currency is vital. Korean currency is called 원 (wuhn), and it's denoted by the symbol ₩.

Chapter 8 highlights more about 한국 돈 (hahn-gook dohn) (*Korean money*) and how 환전 (hwahn-juhn) (*exchanging money*) works. You can also discover words and phrases to use at the bank and while making payments. It pays you to be prepared!

Going out for an eating adventure

Dining out at a 식당 (sheek-ttahng) (*restaurant*) can be a lot of fun (and satisfying!). Indeed, indulging in authentic cuisine and dining alongside locals is a great way to learn about a new language and culture. Here are some basic words and phrases for Korean dishes:

- » 밥 (bahp) (*rice, meal*)
- » 국 (gook) (*soup*)
- » 김치 (geem-chee) (*kimchi*)

- » 반찬 (bahn-chahn) (*side dishes*)
- » 맛있어요! (mah-shee-ssuh-yoh) (*delicious!*)

In Chapter 9, we take you on a culinary journey through Korean cuisine, introducing a delectable array of 음식 (eum-sheek) (*foods*) vocabulary and phrases.

Making shopping easy and fun

쇼핑 (shyoh-peeng) (*shopping*) is another fun way to put your language skills to good use. Korea is a shopper's mecca and you'll find great buys almost everywhere you go. One of Korea's biggest attractions is 전통 시장 (juhn-tohng-shee-jahng) (*traditional markets*), and among them, 남대문 시장 (nahm-dae-moon shee-jahng) (*South Gate Market*) in Seoul is the largest. 백화점 (bae-kwah-juhm) (*department stores*) or 가게 (gah-geh) (*small stores*) are other places for 쇼핑.

If you don't like the hustle and bustle, then don't forget to check out 온라인 쇼핑 (ohn-nah-een shyoh-peeng) (*online shopping*). Some of the popular online shopping malls in Korea are *Coupang* and *G-market*. For second-hand As Korea is ranked as one of the largest e-commerce markets, you'll be amazed how convenient 온라인 쇼핑 is there.

In Chapter 10, you can explore important words, phrases, and tips to help you shop 'til you drop. Discover basic shopping lingo, where to go to buy what, when and how to negotiate prices, and more!

Going around the town

Korea is a vibrant country, and its major cities are bustling with exciting activities around the clock. Whether it's day or night, get ready to explore the town with essential vocabulary to immerse yourself in fun places and cultural activities such as 민속촌 (mee-sohk-chohn) (*folk village*), 박물관 (bahng-mool-gwahn) (*museums*), 극장 (geuk-jjahng) (*theaters*), pop-culture spots, and more! And don't forget to check out Korea's unique “방 문화” (bahng moon-hwah) (“*room culture*”) as well:

- » 노래방 (noh-rae-bahng) (*Korean style karaoke room*)
- » 찜질방 (jjeem-jeel-bahng) (*Korean bathhouses; sauna rooms*)
- » PC방 (pee-ssee-bahng) (*computer rooms*)
- » 만화방 (mahn-hwah-bahng) (*cartoon room*)

For further guideline, consult Chapter 11 for help navigating all these places and activities in Korean.

Getting connected using technology

South Korea is known for having one of the fastest 인터넷 (een-tuh-neht) (*Internet*) speeds in the world. The country is blanketed in free Wi-Fi. Public areas like cafés and malls — as well as public transit like busses and subways — are well equipped with 와이파이 (wah-ee-pah-ee) (*Wi-Fi*). You'll be well connected with your friends and family at home even while on the other side of the hemisphere.

Chapter 12 introduces you to the handy terms and phrases for using 전화 (juhn-hwah) (*phones*), 휴대전화 (hyoo-dae-juhn-hwah) (*cellphones*), 편지 (pyuhn-jee) (*letters*), 소포 (soh-poh) (*packages*), and 이메일 (ee-meh-eel) (*emails*).

Speaking Korean at work and school settings

Planning to work in Korea? Starting a new job in a foreign country can be a bit daunting, but no worries. We've got you covered. Knowing the right terms and phrases for your new workplace can make your work life much easier. Equipping yourself with the necessary terms and phrases for your new 직장 (jeek-jjahng) (*workplace*) will come in handy and make your 직장 생활 (jeek-jjahng saeng-hwahl) (*work life*) much easier.

If you envision a future working for a 회사 (*company*) or teaching at a 학교 (hahk-kkyoh) (*school*) in Korea, Chapter 13 is indispensable! It is packed with useful info on job searching and application, complemented by handy phrases and cultural notes to help you land the job as well as thrive in your new 직장.

Tackling Tasks on the Move

Now that you've honed your Korean skills in various social settings, it's time to consider traveling to Korea if you haven't yet! Remember the Korean saying, “아는 만큼 보인다” (ah-neun-mahn-keum boh-eeen-dah). (*You can see as much as you know.*) The more prepared you are, the more enjoyable your trip will be. The upcoming chapters in Part 3 give you plenty of 여행 안내 (yuh-haeng ahn-nae) (*travel guidance*) to help you with everything from making plans to finding accommodations to handling emergencies.

Preparing for a trip

A major milestone for any learner of 외국어 (wae-goo-guh) (*foreign language*) is being able to navigate 여행 (yuh-haeng) (*travel*) through a different country!

Chapter 14 helps you make the most of your 한국 여행 (hahn-gook yuh-haeng) (*travel to Korea*). We bring out essential words and phrases necessary for sorting out the logistics of your trip, such as 언제 (uhn-jeh) (*when*), 어디로 (uh-dee-roh) (*to where*), what to bring, and more.

Searching for a place to stay

If you're a first-time visitor to Korea, it may be challenging to find the right 숙소 (sook-ssoh) (*accommodation*) for you. But no worries! Korea has an incredible variety of places to stay, including 한옥 게스트 하우스 (hah-nok geh-seu-teu hah-woo-sseu) (*Hanok guest house*) and 템플 스테이 (tehm-peul seu-teh-ee) (*temple stay*). 한옥 refers to a traditional Korean house, and staying at one during your trip can be an unforgettable experience.

Chapter 15 provides information about the types of 숙소, and how to make 예약 (yeh-yahk) (*reservations*), 체크인 (cheh-keu-een) (*check in*) and 체크아웃 (cheh-keu-oot) (*check out*), and more.

Getting around with transportation

Navigating Korea is a breeze, thanks to its awesome 대중교통 (dae-joong-gyoh-tohng) (*public transport*) system. However, exploring the cities might initially seem daunting, especially if you don't know your way around. Even with good 대중교통, dealing with transportation can be a bit of a hassle if you're not fluent in the local language. Don't get panicky — just turn to Chapter 16. We help you make your way around using different modes of transportation: 비행기 (bee-haeng-gee) (*plane*), 지하철 (jee-hah-chuhl) (*subway*), 버스 (buh-sseu) (*bus*), 택시 (taek-ssee) (*taxi*), and 렌트카 (lehn-teu-kah) (*rental car*).

Asking for directions

While having 지도앱 (jee-doh-aep) (*map apps*) on your phone is undoubtedly convenient, mastering the art of asking for directions remains a vital skill when traveling a 외국 (weh-gook) (*foreign country*). Your phone battery might run out, or locals might offer inside shortcuts. Chapter 17 provides details on how to give directions, ensuring you navigate with confidence and ease wherever your travels take you.

Taking action in an emergency

Although the chances of something majorly bad happening during your trip to Korea are rather slim, you always run the chance of needing to call the 경찰서 (gyung-chahl-ssuh) (*police*) or ending up in a 병원 (byuhng-wuhn) (*hospital*). You can best manage emergencies when you are prepared. Chapter 18 helps you with words and phrases to know when dealing with life's unexpected (not-so-fun) adventures.

