

Learn Korean Ep. 106: Adverbs

An adverb is a word that describes a verb – how a verb happens, or in what way a verb is, for example. Adverbs can also be used to describe other adverbs.

For example, in English you might run “quickly” or dance “happily.” Adverbs in English can often end with “ly” but there are plenty that don’t. In Korean, many adverbs end with “게” but there are also many that don’t.

Descriptive Verb Stem + 게

To make an adverb in Korean from a descriptive verb, take the descriptive verb stem and attach 게. Let’s look at an example.

도착했어요.

I arrived.

We can add an adverb to describe **how** we arrived. For example, we could use the descriptive verb 안전하다 [“to be safe”] to say that we arrived **safely** at our destination.

안전하게 도착했어요.

I arrived safely.

Here’s another example:

지금 웃고 있어요.

I’m smiling now.

We can add an adverb to describe **how** we are smiling. For example, we could use the descriptive verb 행복하다 [“to be happy”] to say that we’re smiling **happily**.

지금 행복하게 웃고 있어요.

I’m smiling happily now.

김치를 맵게 만들고 싶어요.

I want to make the kimchi spicy.

맵게 comes from 맵다 ["to be spicy"].

철수 씨는 빠르게 말해요.

Chul-soo speaks quickly.

빠르게 comes from 빠르다 ["to be quick"].

Unique Korean Adverbs

Not all adverbs in Korean end with 게. For example, instead of 빠르게 we could also say 빨리, and both mean "quickly." In addition, 빨리 can also be used to mean "hurry up" or "right away" when used together with a command. However, 빠르게 can only be used to mean "quickly."

철수 씨는 빨리 말해요.

Chul-soo speaks quickly.

김치를 더 주세요.

Please give me more kimchi.

더 is another adverb that means "more." Its opposite is 덜, meaning "less."

너무 맛있어요.

It's so delicious!

너무 is an adverb that means "too much," but in casual usage it just means "so much."

저는 한국어를 잘해요.

I speak Korean well.

잘 is a very common adverb that means “well,” such as to say that you do something well. It can also be used to mean “often,” among other things.

이미 많이 먹었어요.

I ate a lot already.

많이 means “a lot,” but is an adverb – it needs to be used directly before a verb. To say that there is a lot of something, simply conjugate the descriptive verb 많다 [“to be a lot”].

To Use 게?

Not all adverbs made with 게 will sound natural or be commonly used. For example, to say that something moves **slowly** (from the descriptive verb 천천하다), use 천천히 [“slowly”] – not 천천하게.

Many descriptive verbs ending with 하다 can also become adverbs by changing 하다 to 히 instead of 하게. For example, 안전하다 [“to be safe”] can become either 안전하게 or 안전히 – both mean “safely.” However, the only way to know whether the 히 or 하게 version is more commonly used for each descriptive verb is by listening to how Koreans speak and learning each one separately. There are no tricks to learning adverbs, and the best way is to learn them one at a time.

Advanced Notes

A commonly used adverb is 재미있게, which means “entertainingly” and comes from 재미(가) 있다. It can be used to mean that you’re doing something while **enjoying** it.

영화를 재미있게 봤어요.

I enjoyed watching the movie.

Another common adverb is 맛있게, which means “deliciously” and comes from 맛(이) 있다. It can be used to mean that you’re **eating** something and **enjoying** it.

아이스크림을 맛있게 먹었어요.
I enjoyed (eating) the ice cream.

Conclusion

If you have any questions, feel free to send me a message through my web site or on YouTube. Good luck in your studies!

