

Lesson 19: Counters

In this lesson, you will learn how to use the native Korean numbers that you learned in the last lesson together with Korean counters, to count things, people, and animals.

KEY INFORMATION

개 [gae] = Counting unit for things
명 [myeong] = Counting unit for people
마리 [ma-ri] = Counting unit for animals

In Korean, there are many different 'counting units' and the one you use depends on what is being counted. When counting things/people/animals in English, the number is followed by what is being counted. For example, "two bottles", "three people", "four dogs", etc.

In Korean, specific counting units are used for different groups of things. First, let's look at the very common counting unit 개 [gae] which is the counting unit for 'things'.

개 [gae]

There are hundreds of counting units in Korean and learning all of them would be quite difficult for a beginner Korean learner. Luckily, the counting unit 개 [gae] is a general counter that can be used for counting many different objects. Let's look at some examples:

펜 한 개 [pen han gae] = *one pen*
사과 두 개 [sa-gwa du gae] = *two apples*
공 세 개 [gong se gae] = *three balls*

As you can see, 개 [gae] is very useful and can be used to count a variety of different things. To use counting units, simply place the counter after the number.

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명 [myeong]

개 cannot be used when counting people, animals, or actions. When counting people, the counting unit 명 [myeong] is used. Here are some examples:

한 명 [han myeong] = *one person*

학생 두 명 [hak-saeng du myeong] = *two students*

친구 세 명 [chin-gu se myeong] = *three friends*

선생님 네 명 [seon-saeng-nim ne myeong] = *four teachers*

스무 명 [su-mu myeong] = *twenty people*

**Did you notice anything different about the numbers in the above examples? If you look closely, you'll see that the native Korean numbers 1,2,3,4, and 20 are spelled slightly differently from their normal spelling. When these numbers are used together with a counting unit, they are shortened slightly. For all other numbers, the word doesn't change.*

마리 [ma-ri]

When counting animals, the counting unit 마리 [ma-ri] is used. Here are some examples:

한 마리 [han ma-ri] = *one animal*

새 일곱 마리 [sae il-gop ma-ri] = *seven birds*

개 열한 마리 [gae yeol-han ma-ri] = *eleven dogs*

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Example Sentences

In this lesson, you learned that Korean counting units are used together with native Korean numbers when you want to count things, people, animals, etc. As we mentioned above, there are many different counting units in Korean, and too many to mention in this lesson. Here are some example sentences using some of the most common counting units:

개 [gae] = *counting unit for things*

사과 다섯 개 샀어요. [sa-gwa da-seot gae sa-sseo-yo] = *I bought five apples.*

명 [myeong] = *counting unit for people*

교실에 학생 열 명 있어요. [gyo-si-re hak-saeng yeol myeong i-sseo-yo] =

There are ten students in the classroom.

마리 [ma-ri] = *counting unit for animals*

집에 개 세 마리 있어요. [ji-be gae se ma-ri i-sseo-yo] = *I have two dogs at home.*

병 [byeong] = *counting unit for bottles*

콜라 한 병 주세요. [kol-la han byeong ju-se-yo] = *One bottle of cola, please.*

잔 [jan] = *counting unit for glasses/cups*

커피 두 잔 주세요. [keo-pi du-jan ju-se-yo] = *Give me two cups of coffee, please.*

그릇 [geu-reut] = *counting unit for bowls*

밥 한 그릇 주세요. [bab han geu-reut ju-se-yo] = *One bowl of rice, please.*