

# -아/어 있다

be in a state of — the result of an action

Describes the condition something is left in after an action finishes. The counterpart of -고 있다, which describes the action still under way.

## HOW TO ATTACH IT

|                       |           |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Last vowel ㅣ or ㅓ     | -아 있다     | 앉다 → 앉아 있어요     |
| Any other vowel       | -어 있다     | 열리다 → 열려 있어요    |
| Intransitive only     | no object | 앉다, 서다, 남다, 열리다 |
| Transitive verbs take | -고 있다     | 밥을 먹고 있어요       |
| Honorific             | -아/어 계시다  | 앉아 계세요          |
| Past                  | -아/어 있었다  | 서 있었어요          |

## WHEN TO USE IT

The vowel follows the -아요/어요 rule: 앉아 있다, 서 있다, 열려 있다.

The key restriction is that it attaches only to intransitive verbs — verbs with no object. 앉다, 서다, 눕다, 남다, and the passive forms 열리다, 켜지다, 닫히다 all qualify. A transitive verb like 먹다 cannot take it: 밥을 먹어 있어요 is impossible.

Against -고 있다 the contrast is sharp. 앉고 있어요 means someone is in the act of sitting down; 앉아 있어요 means they are seated. English "is sitting" covers both, which is why learners default to -고 있다 and end up describing a very slow descent into a chair.

With an honoured subject, 있다 rises to 계시다: 선생님이 앉아 계세요.

## IN USE

- 친구가 저기 앉아 있어요.  
My friend is sitting over there.
- 창문이 열려 있어요.  
The window is open.
- 불이 아직 켜져 있어요.  
The light is still on.
- 사람들이 줄을 서 있었어요.  
People were standing in line.
- 음식이 조금 남아 있어요.  
There's a bit of food left.

6 할아버지가 소파에 앉아 계세요.

Grandfather is sitting on the sofa.

COMPARED WITH

-고 있다

-고 있다 is the action unfolding; -아/어 있다 is the state it produced. For anything with an object, only -고 있다 is possible.

앉고 있어요. (lowering into the chair) / 앉아 있어요. (seated)

Passive verbs

Many of the verbs that take this ending are passive forms in their own right. Learning the pairs together is efficient.

열다 → 열리다 → 열려 있다 / 켜다 → 켜지다 → 켜져 있다

-아/어 놓다

-아/어 놓다 says someone did it and left it that way, keeping the agent in view. -아/어 있다 reports the state without saying who caused it.

창문이 열려 있어요. (the window is open) / 창문을 열어 놓았어요. (I left the window open)

WATCH OUT

X 지금 밥을 먹어 있어요.

O 지금 밥을 먹고 있어요.

먹다 takes an object, so it cannot use this ending. Only intransitive verbs describe a resulting state this way.

X 친구가 저기 앉고 있어요. — meaning "is sitting there"

O 친구가 저기 앉아 있어요.

앉고 있어요 describes the act of sitting down. For someone already seated, the state form is required.

X 할아버지가 소파에 앉아 있어요.

O 할아버지가 소파에 앉아 계세요.

With an honoured subject, 있다 becomes 계시다 so the whole sentence matches.