

-아라/어라

plain imperative

The command form that matches -(느)ㄴ다. Direct, unsoftened, and strictly downward — parents to children, coaches to players, slogans to nobody.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Last vowel ㅣ or ㅓ	-아라	앉다 → 앉아라
Any other vowel	-어라	먹다 → 먹어라
하다 verbs	해라	공부해라
Merging	as in -아요/어요	가다 → 가라
Negative	-지 마라	가지 마라
Written instruction	-(으)라	알맞은 것을 고르라

WHEN TO USE IT

The vowel follows the -아요/어요 rule: 먹어라, 앉아라, 해라. 하다 gives 해라, and 가다 merges to 가라.

It is a real command with no politeness attached. Parents use it with children, and older siblings with younger ones. Aimed at anyone senior it is not merely impolite but genuinely offensive.

It also appears where there is no listener at all: instructions in exams (알맞은 것을 고르라), slogans, and titles. Note that written instructions often use the shortened -(으)라 rather than -아라/어라.

Between friends, the usual command form is simply -아/어 — 먹어 rather than 먹어라, which sounds firmer. The negative is -지 마라.

IN USE

- 1 밥 먹어라.
Eat your dinner.
- 2 여기 좀 앉아라.
Sit down here for a moment.
- 3 숙제부터 해라.
Do your homework first.
- 4 늦었으니까 빨리 가라.
It's late, so get going.
- 5 걱정하지 마라. 다 잘될 거야.
Don't worry. It'll all work out.

6 다음 글을 읽고 물음에 답하라.

Read the following passage and answer the questions.

COMPARED WITH

-(으)세요

-(으)세요 is the polite request; -아라/어라 is a bare command. There is no overlap in who you can use them with.

여기 앉으세요. (please sit) / 여기 앉아라. (sit down)

-아/어

Among friends, the plain stem alone works as a command and sounds softer. -아라 adds force.

빨리 먹어. (eat up) / 빨리 먹어라. (eat, I said)

-(으)라

The shortened form used in written instructions and, importantly, in reported commands: -(으)라고 하다.

고르라. (exam instruction) / 가라고 했어요. (he told me to go)

WATCH OUT

X 숙제부터 하아라.

O 숙제부터 해라.

하다 becomes 해 before this ending, as it does everywhere. 공부해라, 운동해라, 전화해라.

X 선생님, 여기 앉아라.

O 선생님, 여기 앉으세요.

This form is used downward only. Aimed at someone senior it is not just impolite — it is insulting.

X 걱정하지 않아라.

O 걱정하지 마라.

Prohibitions are built on 말다, whatever the politeness level. 않다 cannot form a command.