

# -(으)ㄹ 뻔하다

almost happened — but didn't

Reports a near miss. The thing did not occur, which is the whole point — and it appears almost exclusively in the past.

## HOW TO ATTACH IT

|                     |                |                           |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Ends in a vowel     | -ㄹ 뻔했다         | 넘어지다 → 넘어질 뻔했어요           |
| Ends in a consonant | -을 뻔했다         | 죽다 → 죽을 뻔했어요              |
| Ends in ㄹ           | nothing added  | 만들다 → 만들 뻔했어요             |
| Usual tense         | past only      | 뻔했어요 — not 뻔해요            |
| Spacing             | 뻔 is a noun    | 넘어질 뻔했어요                  |
| The event           | did not happen | you did not actually fall |

## WHEN TO USE IT

Attachment is the standard rule with the ㄹ short form: 만들다 gives 만들 뻔했다. 뻔 is a noun, so it takes a space.

It is almost always past: 뻔했어요, not 뻔해요. The near miss has already been survived, which is why you are talking about it.

The event is typically something unwanted — falling, being late, forgetting, an accident. Korean does occasionally use it for a missed good outcome, but the default reading is relief that something bad was avoided.

Because the event did not happen, negating the sentence reverses the meaning in a way learners find confusing: 안 넘어질 뻔했어요 would mean you almost didn't fall, which is rarely what anyone means.

## IN USE

- 계단에서 넘어질 뻔했어요.  
I nearly fell on the stairs.
- 늦잠을 자서 지각할 뻔했어요.  
I overslept and almost turned up late.
- 약속을 잊어버릴 뻔했어요.  
I very nearly forgot the appointment.
- 하마터면 큰 사고가 날 뻔했습니다.  
There was very nearly a serious accident.
- 소금을 두 번 넣을 뻔했어요.  
I almost added the salt twice.

6 너무 매워서 눈물이 날 뻔했어요.

It was so spicy it nearly brought tears to my eyes.

COMPARED WITH

거의

거의 means "nearly" and can describe something that did happen, almost completely. -(으)ㄹ 뻔하다 says it did not happen at all.

거의 다 먹었어요. (I ate nearly all of it) / 먹을 뻔했어요. (I almost ate it, but didn't)

-(으)ㄹ 것 같았다

것 같았다 reports what you expected at the time; 뻔했다 reports how close reality came. One is a guess, the other a near miss.

늦을 것 같았어요. (I thought I'd be late) / 늦을 뻔했어요. (I nearly was late)

하마터면

An adverb meaning "very nearly," used almost exclusively with this ending. Learning them as a pair is efficient.

하마터면 넘어질 뻔했어요.

WATCH OUT

X 지금 넘어질 뻔해요.

O 아까 넘어질 뻔했어요.

A near miss is something you have already survived, so the ending appears in the past.

X 소금을 두 번 넣을 뻔했는데 실제로 넣었어요.

O 소금을 두 번 넣을 뻔했지만 다행히 안 넣었어요.

뻔하다 states that the thing did not happen. Following it with a claim that it did contradicts the construction.

X 저녁을 만들 뻔했어요.

O 저녁을 만들 뻔했어요.

A stem ending in ㄹ already supplies it, as with 만들 거예요 and 만들 테니까.