

-(으)ㄹ까 봐

in case, for fear that

Names a worry that made you act. Nearly identical in shape to -(으)ㄹ까 하다, but the two mean completely different things.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Ends in a vowel	-ㄹ까 봐	오다 → 올까 봐
Ends in a consonant	-을까 봐	늦다 → 늦을까 봐
Ends in ㄹ	-까 봐	만들다 → 만들까 봐
Fuller form	-(으)ㄹ까 봐서	늦을까 봐서
Fear about the past	-았/었을까 봐	잘못했을까 봐
Different meaning	-(으)ㄹ까 하다	갈까 해요 = I'm thinking of going

WHEN TO USE IT

Attachment matches -(으)ㄹ까요? exactly, with the ㄹ short form: 만들다 gives 만들까 봐. The fuller -(으)ㄹ까 봐서 is equally correct.

The first clause is what you feared; the second is the precaution you took: 늦을까 봐 택시를 탔어요. That structure is fixed — worry, then action.

The feared thing is almost always unwelcome, and it has not happened. For a fear about something already done, the past goes inside: 잘못했을까 봐 걱정이예요.

The contrast with -(으)ㄹ까 하다 is worth fixing early. 갈까 해요 means you are thinking of going; 갈까 봐 means you are afraid someone will go.

IN USE

- 1 늦을까 봐 택시를 탔어요.
I took a taxi in case I'd be late.
- 2 비가 올까 봐 우산을 가져왔어요.
I brought an umbrella in case it rained.
- 3 아이가 깰까 봐 조용히 들어왔어요.
I came in quietly so as not to wake the baby.
- 4 잊어버릴까 봐 메모해 뒀어요.
I wrote it down in case I forgot.
- 5 모자랄까 봐 좀 더 만들었어요.
I made a bit more in case there wasn't enough.

6 제가 실수했을까 봐 계속 걱정돼요.

I keep worrying that I might have made a mistake.

COMPARED WITH

-(으)ㄹ까 하다

One syllable apart, unrelated meanings. 하다 reports your own tentative plan; 봐 reports a fear about what might happen.

갈까 해요. (I'm thinking of going) / 갈까 봐 걱정이에요. (I'm worried he'll go)

-(으)ㄹ 것 같아서

것 같아서 gives a plain expectation as your reason; -(으)ㄹ까 봐 adds that you did not want it to happen.

비가 올 것 같아서 우산을 챙겼어요. (I expected rain) / 비가 올까 봐 챙겼어요. (I was afraid of rain)

-지 않을까 봐

Negating the feared event gives the opposite worry, and the double negative catches learners out.

늦을까 봐 (afraid of being late) / 안 올까 봐 (afraid he won't come)

WATCH OUT

X 주말에 여행을 갈까 봐요.

O 주말에 여행을 갈까 해요.

For a plan you are considering, the verb is 하다. 봐 turns it into a fear about someone going.

X 모자랄까 봐 좀 더 만들을까 봐요.

O 모자랄까 봐 좀 더 만들었어요.

The second clause states the precaution you actually took. It is a normal predicate, not another -(으)ㄹ까 봐.

X 제가 실수할까 봐 계속 걱정돼요. — about something already done

O 제가 실수했을까 봐 계속 걱정돼요.

For a fear about something already finished, the past goes inside the ending.