

-(으)면

if, when

Sets a condition. Korean does not separate "if" from "whenever" here — one ending covers both, and context decides which one an English speaker would say.

How it attaches

Stem type	Form	Example
Ends in a vowel	-면	가다 → 가면
Ends in a consonant	-으면	먹다 → 먹으면
Ends in ㄹ	ㄹ stays, nothing added	만들다 → 만들면
이다	-(이)면	학생이면
Permission, obligation	-(으)면 되다 / 안 되다	가면 돼요 / 가면 안 돼요
Wish	-(으)면 좋겠다	비가 오면 좋겠어요

Notes

As a condition: 시간이 있으면 같이 가요. As a habitual trigger: 봄이 되면 꽃이 펴요 (when spring comes, flowers bloom). English would use "if" for the first and "when" for the second; Korean sees one pattern.

Attachment is the standard consonant rule, and ㄹ behaves the easy way for once — it stays and nothing is added: 만들다 gives 만들면.

It anchors several everyday patterns you will meet soon: -(으)면 되다 (it's fine if, that will do), -(으)면 안 되다 (must not), and -(으)면 좋겠다 (I hope, I wish). Learning the ending well pays off across all of them.

Examples

- 1 시간이 있으면 연락 주세요.
If you have time, get in touch.
- 2 비가 오면 안 갈 거예요.
If it rains, I won't go.
- 3 봄이 되면 꽃이 펴요.
When spring comes, the flowers bloom.
- 4 한국에 가면 뭘 하고 싶어요?
What do you want to do if you go to Korea?
- 5 돈이 많으면 좋겠어요.
I wish I had a lot of money.
- 6 이 버튼을 누르면 열려요.
It opens when you press this button.

Compared with

-(으)ㄹ 때

-(으)면 sets a condition that may or may not hold; -(으)ㄹ 때 names a time that does. For a one-off past event, only -(으)ㄹ 때 works.

한국에 가면 김치를 먹어요. (whenever I go) / 한국에 갔을 때 김치를 먹었어요. (when I went)

-아/어도

-(으)면 says the condition brings the result about; -아/어도 says the result holds regardless.

비가 오면 안 갈 거예요. (if it rains, I won't go) / 비가 와도 갈 거예요. (even if it rains, I'll go)

-(으)니까

-(으)니까 treats the first clause as an established fact; -(으)면 leaves it open. Swapping them changes a reason into a possibility.

시간이 없으니까 택시를 탑시다. (we have no time) / 시간이 없으면 택시를 타세요. (if you're short of time)

Watch out

✗ 제가 만들으면 드실래요?

○ 제가 만들면 드실래요?

Stems ending in ㄹ take nothing extra here. Note that this differs from -(으)니까, where the ㄹ drops instead.

✗ 작년에 한국에 가면 김치를 먹었어요.

○ 작년에 한국에 갔을 때 김치를 먹었어요.

-(으)면 describes a repeatable condition. A single completed event needs -(으)ㄹ 때 with the past marker.

✗ 내일 비가 왔으면 안 갈 거예요.

○ 내일 비가 오면 안 갈 거예요.

A future condition stays in the plain form. -왔/었으면 exists but expresses a wish, as in 비가 왔으면 좋겠어요.