

-(으)ㄴ/는 척하다

pretend to

Says someone is putting on an appearance they know to be false. Follows the modifier system, so verbs and adjectives take different forms.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Verb, present	-는 척하다	자다 → 자는 척했어요
Verb, completed	-(으)ㄴ 척하다	먹다 → 먹은 척했어요
Adjective	-(으)ㄴ 척하다	괜찮다 → 괜찮은 척했어요
이다	-인 척하다	학생인 척했어요
Ends in ㄹ	ㄹ drops	알다 → 아는 척했어요
Synonym	-(으)ㄴ/는 체하다	아는 체하다

WHEN TO USE IT

Verbs take -는 척하다 for present, -(으)ㄴ 척하다 for a completed action. Adjectives take -(으)ㄴ 척하다. 이다 gives -인 척하다. Stems in ㄹ drop it.

The pretence is deliberate and the speaker knows it is false: 자는 척했어요 means you were awake and performing sleep. This is quite different from -아/어 보이다, which merely reports an impression.

The word 체하다 is an exact synonym and slightly more formal: 아는 체하다, 잘난 체하다. Two of these have hardened into set expressions for showing off.

Because it attributes dishonesty, saying it about someone senior is a strong accusation.

IN USE

- 1 피곤해서 자는 척했어요.
I was tired, so I pretended to be asleep.
- 2 모르면서 아는 척하지 마세요.
Don't pretend to know when you don't.
- 3 괜찮은 척했지만 사실은 많이 아팠어요.
I acted like I was fine, but it really hurt.
- 4 못 들은 척하고 그냥 지나갔어요.
I pretended not to hear and just walked past.
- 5 그 사람은 늘 잘난 척해요.
He's always showing off.

- 6 처음 보는 척했지만 서로 아는 사이였어요.
They acted like strangers, but they knew each other.

COMPARED WITH

-아/어 보이다

-아/어 보이다 reports how something looks to you; 척하다 says the person is staging it on purpose. One is observation, the other accusation.

괜찮아 보여요. (you look fine) / 괜찮은 척해요. (you're acting fine)

-(으)ㄴ/는 것 같다

것 같다 hedges your own judgement; 척하다 makes a claim about someone else's intent. They are not interchangeable.

자는 것 같아요. (I think he's asleep) / 자는 척해요. (he's pretending to sleep)

-(으)ㄴ/는 체하다

The same construction with a different noun. 체하다 is a little more formal, and 잘난 체하다 and 아는 체하다 are the two you will meet most.

아는 척하다 / 아는 체하다

WATCH OUT

X 괜찮는 척했어요.

O 괜찮은 척했어요.

괜찮다 is an adjective, so it takes -(으)ㄴ. -는 belongs to verbs.

X 모르면서 아는 척하지 마세요.

O 모르면서 아는 척하지 마세요.

Stems ending in ㄹ drop it before -는, as everywhere in the modifier system.

X 부장님이 모르는 척하시네요.

O 부장님이 잘 모르시는 것 같습니다.

척하다 accuses someone of putting on an act. Directed at a superior it is a serious charge, so hedge with 것 같다 instead.