

-거나

or — between verbs and clauses

The verb counterpart of (이)나. English "or" covers both, so the two get mixed up constantly.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Any verb or adjective	-거나	읽다 → 읽거나
ㄹ stems keep the ㄹ	-거나	만들다 → 만들거나
Both halves marked	-거나 -거나	읽거나 보거나 해요
Past	-았/었거나	갔거나
Nouns take	(이)나	커피나 차 — not 커피거나
Indifference	-든지	읽든지 보든지

WHEN TO USE IT

Attach -거나 to any stem — no vowel rule, ㄹ stays, and tense can appear in front when needed: 갔거나.

It joins two actions or states as alternatives: 주말에는 책을 읽거나 영화를 봐요. Attaching it to both halves — 읽거나 보거나 하다 — adds a sense of "one or the other, it varies."

The line to hold is against (이)나, which joins nouns. 커피나 차 is right; 커피거나 차 is not. If what you are joining could take a particle, you need (이)나.

It also works with adjectives: 너무 짜거나 매우면 말씀해 주세요.

IN USE

- 1 주말에는 책을 읽거나 영화를 봐요.
At weekends I read or watch films.
- 2 시간이 없거나 피곤하면 안 가도 돼요.
If you're short on time or tired, you don't have to come.
- 3 저녁은 만들거나 시켜 먹어요.
For dinner I either cook or order in.
- 4 너무 짜거나 매우면 말씀해 주세요.
Let me know if it's too salty or too spicy.
- 5 그 사람은 벌써 갔거나 지금 오는 중일 거예요.
He's either already gone or on his way now.
- 6 쉬는 날에는 자거나 산책하거나 해요.
On days off I sleep, or go for a walk, or something.

COMPARED WITH

(이)나

Nouns take (이)나; verbs and adjectives take -거나. This is the single distinction that matters, and it catches learners at every level.

커피나 차를 마세요. (coffee or tea) / 커피를 마시거나 차를 마세요. (drink coffee or drink tea)

-든지

-거나 presents a genuine choice between two options; -든지 says it makes no difference which. Close in form, different in attitude.

읽거나 봐요. (I read or watch) / 읽든지 보든지 하세요. (read, watch, whatever you like)

아니면

아니면 stands between two full sentences, closer to "or else." It is not a particle and attaches to nothing.

책을 읽거나 영화를 봐요. / 책을 읽어요. 아니면 영화를 봐요.

WATCH OUT

X 커피거나 차를 주세요.

O 커피나 차를 주세요.

-거나 joins verbs and adjectives. To offer a choice between two nouns, use (이)나.

X 저녁은 만들거나 시키다 해요.

O 저녁은 만들거나 시켜 먹어요.

The second half needs to be a properly conjugated clause. -거나 links two complete predicates, not a stem to a bare dictionary form.

X 시간이 없거나 피곤하면 말하세요.

O 시간이 없거나 피곤하면 말하세요.

-거나 attaches to the plain stem, not to the -아요/어요 form. Strip the ending back first.