

-고 나서

after finishing

Marks the first action as finished before the second begins. **나다** means "come out, be done," and it is what adds the sense of completion that plain **-고** lacks.

How it attaches

Situation	Form	Example
Any action verb	-고 나서	먹다 → 먹고 나서
≡ stems keep the ≡	-고 나서	만들다 → 만들고 나서
As a condition	-고 나면	먹고 나면 졸려요
Same meaning	-(으)ㄴ 후에 / 다음에	먹은 후에
Adjectives	cannot take it	좋고 나서 does not exist
Never takes tense	plain stem only	먹었고 나서 is wrong

Notes

Attach **-고 나서** to any verb stem — no vowel rule, **≡** stays, and no tense in front.

It belongs with action verbs only, and normally the same subject performs both actions. Adjectives and **있다** cannot take it, since there is nothing to finish.

Against **-(으)ㄴ 후에**, the difference is emphasis rather than meaning. **후에** places one event after another on a timeline; **-고 나서** stresses that the first was completed and dealt with. In instructions and recipes it is the more natural choice.

The related **-고 나면** turns it into a condition: **먹고 나면 졸려요** (once I've eaten, I get sleepy).

Examples

- 숙제를 하고 나서 놀아요.**
Do your homework first, then play.
- 밥을 먹고 나서 약을 드세요.**
Take the medicine after you've eaten.
- 손을 씻고 나서 재료를 준비하세요.**
Wash your hands, then prepare the ingredients.
- 저녁을 만들고 나서 설거지를 했어요.**
I did the dishes after making dinner.
- 운동하고 나서 샤워를 해요.**
I take a shower after exercising.
- 영화를 보고 나서 커피를 마셨어요.**
We had coffee after watching the film.

Compared with

-고

-고 simply lists actions in order; **-고 나서** insists the first was finished. In a recipe, the difference matters.

손을 씻고 준비하세요. (wash and prepare) / 손을 씻고 나서 준비하세요. (finish washing, then prepare)

-(으)ㄴ 후에

Nearly interchangeable. **후에** is more neutral and works in writing; **-고 나서** sounds more like spoken instruction.

먹은 후에 약을 드세요. / 먹고 나서 약을 드세요.

-자마자

-자마자 means no gap at all; **-고 나서** allows one. If you want to stress immediacy, the first is the right ending.

먹고 나서 나갔어요. (ate, then went out) / 먹자마자 나갔어요. (went out the instant I finished)

Watch out

✗ 밥을 먹었고 나서 약을 먹었어요.

○ 밥을 먹고 나서 약을 먹었어요.

-고 나서 never carries tense. The past is expressed once, on the final verb.

✗ 날씨가 좋고 나서 나갔어요.

○ 날씨가 좋아서 나갔어요.

Adjectives describe states and cannot be finished. This ending takes action verbs only.

✗ 제가 요리하고 나서 동생이 청소했어요.

○ 제가 요리한 후에 동생이 청소했어요.

-고 나서 normally keeps one subject across both clauses. With two people, **-(으)ㄴ 후에** reads more naturally.