

-지만

but, although

Sets the second clause against the first. Attaches to the plain stem with no vowel rule, and unlike -고 it does take tense in the first clause.

How it attaches

Situation	Form	Example
Any verb or adjective	-지만	좋다 → 좋지만
Past	-았/었지만	가다 → 갔지만
이다	-이지만	학생이지만
Formal	-지만 unchanged	어렵지만 하겠습니다
Softer contrast	-(으)ㄴ/는데	비가 오는데
New sentence	하지만	비가 와요. 하지만 갈 거예요.

Notes

-지만 marks the two halves of a sentence as pulling against each other: 비가 오지만 갈 거예요 (it's raining, but I'll go anyway). It attaches straight to the stem — 좋지만, 가지만, 하지만 — with nothing to memorise about vowels or consonants.

Tense belongs inside the ending, not before it. "I went, but" is 갔지만, not 가지만. This differs from -고, where the first clause usually stays tenseless.

Watch out for its cousin 하지만, which looks like the same word. 하지만 is a standalone connector that begins a new sentence, closer to English "However." Using both at once doubles the contrast and reads as a beginner's sentence.

Examples

- 이 옷은 비싸지만 예뻐요.
These clothes are expensive, but they're lovely.
- 한국어는 어렵지만 재미있어요.
Korean is hard, but it's fun.
- 어제 갔지만 문을 닫았어요.
I went yesterday, but it was closed.
- 죄송하지만 다시 말씀해 주세요.
I'm sorry, but could you say that again?
- 저는 학생이지만 일도 해요.
I'm a student, but I work as well.
- 배는 고프지만 먹고 싶지 않아요.
I'm hungry, but I don't feel like eating.

Compared with

-(으)ㄴ/는데

Both introduce contrast, but -는데 is softer and often just sets the scene rather than opposing anything. -지만 states the opposition plainly.

비가 오지만 갈 거예요. (despite the rain) / 비가 오는데 갈 거예요? (it's raining — are you sure?)

하지만 / 그렇지만

These stand at the head of a new sentence; -지만 lives inside one. Choosing between them is a matter of punctuation as much as grammar.

어렵지만 재미있어요. / 어려워요. 하지만 재미있어요.

-아/어도

-지만 acknowledges a fact and moves on; -아/어도 means "even if," and works with situations that have not happened yet.

비가 오지만 갈 거예요. (it is raining) / 비가 와도 갈 거예요. (even if it rains)

Watch out

✗ 이 옷은 좋아지만 비싸요.

○ 이 옷은 좋지만 비싸요.

-지만 attaches to the plain stem, not to the -아요/어요 form. Strip the ending back to 좋 before adding it.

✗ 어제 가지만 문이 닫혀 있었어요.

○ 어제 갔지만 문이 닫혀 있었어요.

Unlike -고, this ending carries its own tense. Past events need -았/었지만.

✗ 어렵지만, 하지만 재미있어요.

○ 어렵지만 재미있어요.

-지만 and 하지만 are two ways of doing the same job. Using both marks the contrast twice.