



# **Families of Korea Teacher's Guide**

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## **Script Rural Family**

### **Families of Korea----Heejin 9 Years Old**

It's early morning in my village in South Korea. My name is Heejin and I'm 9 years old. It's 7:00 o'clock when mother wakes me and my sister up to get ready for school.

Our bathroom is waterproof and has a drain in the floor so we can use the faucet with a pail, like I'm doing today. Or we can use the whole room if we want to take a shower.

We just built our house last year. It's built like an old Korean house, with low doors and sliding paper windows. Most Korean homes have heated floors, so sitting like this is warm and cozy.

Many of my friends have a brother or two, but I have only my sister. I heard that parents, especially grandparents, like boys better than girls. My parents don't seem to care, but I don't know how they really feel inside.

That's father sweeping the street in front of our house.

Mother's making breakfast...  
and my sister and I are studying until it's time to eat.

Mother's parents are coming for breakfast. They live across the street and often eat with us. In Korea, we show respect for people who are older or who know more than we do, by bowing, by giving and taking things with both hands, and by not interrupting older people when they're talking.

For most meals we have soup, along with a vegetable, some kind of meat or fish, pickled vegetables called kimchi, and always...rice. My parents and grandparents are farmers, but my mother and grandmother are good cooks, so they both also run small restaurants. Mother says she and grandmother are more independent than most women in Korea.

After breakfast grandfather and father decide to pick persimmons from the tree in front of our house. Grandmother brings a cloth to catch the fruit so it doesn't get bruised. Father likes the idea of catching the fruit in a bag, but sometimes a persimmon misses the bag and hits him right on the head. Our

neighbors use a different tool to pick persimmons. It has teeth that grab the fruit and drop it into the small basket at the end of the pole.

We walk about 5 minutes to our bus, and then take a ten-minute bus ride to school.

Hahoe village has about 200 people. The village is so old that the Korean Government is helping to preserve, or save, the buildings and walls. Ours is the only new home in the village, but it fits right in because it's built in the old, traditional way.

All Hahoe homes have a mountain in back to protect them in winter, and the river in front, to catch the cool breezes in summer. Father says this is the Korean way of working with nature instead of against it.

When we go inside a home or school we take off our street shoes and put on shoes or slippers that we only wear indoors.

I'm in third grade. Our first class is English. Every day we listen to an English lesson on TV. Then we do workbooks and practice speaking English with our teacher.

Today, because it's raining, we go to the computer lab for recess instead of outside. A thousand years ago, a man named Confucius taught that education is the most important thing in life, and most Koreans still follow this belief today. So schools and our parents try hard to get whatever equipment we need to learn.

Our lunch is cooked here at school and served in the hall at the end of our floor. We're having rice, vegetables with meat, and kimchi. We use spoons for soup and rice, and chopsticks for everything else.

After school we have activities. These kids are learning to carve traditional totem poles, which people have been making in this area for hundreds of years.

Another tradition in this area is mask dancing. Each village in our area has a mask dance with its own special story, costumes and music. Mask dancing was developed hundreds of years ago when villagers wanted to make fun of some of their unpopular rulers. It's a mixture of acting and dancing, and it's

funny, but deep down it's also serious. The dances allowed people to complain about their rulers without the rulers knowing who they were, and without the rulers taking the criticism too seriously.

After school some of us are learning Hahoe Village's mask dance. I play a drum. Today we're practicing for a performance we're giving next week.

People pay to see mask dances, and father says this money will help young families stay in Hahoe Village instead of moving to a city. These adults perform Hahoe's mask dance in our village for thousands of visitors every weekend.

We only have a half-day of school on Saturday, so after school my father and I go to the market in a nearby town. Father's buying fish and vegetables for our restaurant.

On the way home from the market, we stop at a paper factory to buy gift-wrapping for grandmother's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday next week. A person's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday and 60th birthday are the most important ones, so we're having a big celebration.

This factory makes hanji, which is paper made from the bark of mulberry trees. When the bark has been cooked and bleached, people take out any sticks or dirt. Then the bark is put into a tank with a beater that breaks the bark apart. This is the time to put in a color, or to add flower petals or straw. The pulp is run across a screen and most of the water drips out. The thin layer of pulp that's left on the screen will become a sheet of paper when it's dry.

The worker puts a piece of string between each piece of paper to help get the sheets apart later. No one knows why the wet sheets don't stick together when they're piled up.

These sheets of black paper are drying on a wall of hot metal. The woman is using string to separate each sheet so she can pick it up to put it on the drier. Now she's taking down dry sheets and putting them in a pile. The paper is finally ready!

We used paper like this on the inside walls of our house, and also for the windows. Mother says mulberry paper lets in light, but at the same time helps keep out the cold in winter and heat in summer.

On the way home we see lots of rice fields. Rice looks like this before it's picked, or harvested. Some rice is cut by hand, but most is harvested by machines. When the rice plant is cut, the machine separates the rice seed, or grain, from the rest of the plant, which is called straw. When the machine is full, the man empties the rice into a huge bag that his wife is holding open. They'll take the rice into town to be sold.

We harvest peanuts by digging them up. When the peanut plants bloom, the flowers become so heavy that the plants bend down to the ground, where the flowers bury themselves and grow into peanuts.

Most people grow at least a few peppers, which are dried and used in cooking all year long.

We like to stop at the cliff that overlooks our village. You can see why it's called Hahoe, which means, "the river runs around it".

Mother says most young families have left Hahoe, because it's hard to make a living now by just farming. She says lots of schools in Korean villages are closing because there aren't enough children.

This is mother's restaurant, which has two inside rooms and two outside rooms. Father promised to take me and my friends fishing this afternoon, so he's fixing his fishing net. My friends and I play games while we wait for him to finish.

When we go down to the river, it's late afternoon, which Father says is a good time to fish. The weights around the edges of father's net pull the net to the bottom and trap the fish inside the circle. No luck this time. We girls are trying to catch small fish, or minnows.

When we get home, we pretend we're putting on a show.

After our friends leave, my sister and I do some more homework before dinner. We usually have about a half-hour of homework a day.

Mother has invited our grandparents and our school principal for a special dinner. Each person gets a small bowl of everything except the 2 main dishes of beef and crab. They're in the center of the table, where everyone can reach them, in dishes that are heated by little burners.

It's almost 10 o'clock when we finish, and it's time for bed. We put away our clothes, brush our teeth, and say goodnight. Mother comes in just before we drift off to sleep.

Goodnight!

## **Script Urban Family**

### **Families of Korea----Kitae 9 Years Old**

This is where I live in Seoul, South Korea, with my mother, father, and older sister. It's 7:15 and mother just woke me up so I can get ready for school. My name is Kitae and I'm 9 years old.

Three times a week I get a phone call early in the morning. It's from my after-school English teacher. We go over a list of words I studied last night in my workbook. My parents pay for these lessons because they think it's important for me to learn English as well as I can.

By the time I finish, everybody's eating breakfast. We're having rice, kimchi, fish and vegetables.

Father leaves for work at 8 o'clock. He drives about an hour to get to the factory he manages. Father says Korea has more people for our size than any other country. Most people take a bus or subway to work or school, but Seoul has so many people, there are still lots of traffic jams.

The factory makes plastic parts for things like pens. Father talks to customers to see what they need, and he uses his computer to keep track of what they order.

Korean fathers are sometimes called outside persons because they leave home to go to work. Mother's the inside person, in charge of everything in

the house. Before I leave for school, mother checks my homework. She even makes sure my pencils are sharp.

I can walk to school in about 10 minutes, but today I have to stop and buy a new pair of slippers to wear in school.

Our school has 2200 students in grades 1-6. I'm in third grade, and there are about 40 students in my class. Our first subject is Korean, and today we're practicing writing.

Koreans used to read and write with Chinese characters, but they were very difficult to learn. About 500 years ago a great Korean ruler, King Sejong had a special alphabet developed just for the Korean language. The hangul alphabet is much easier to learn, so now almost everyone in Korea can read and write.

Grandfather says the winners of World War Two divided the country in half, so the Soviet Union controlled North Korea and the United States controlled South Korea. South Korea is a free, democratic country today, but Korea is still divided. Grandfather says most people want Korea to become one country again some day.

Today we get a fluoride treatment for our teeth, which helps keep us from getting cavities. We don't swallow the fluoride, we just swish it around and spit it out.

Then we get ready for music class. This keyboard makes sounds, or notes, when I blow into the pipe. Right now, I'm playing the main part of the song, the melody, but we learn to read all the different parts of the music. Our parents have bought us several instruments so that we can learn to play each part. Here most of us are playing the beat, or rhythm.

For English class, we take turns pretending that one person's working in a fast food restaurant and the other is their customer, ordering food. Sorry to say, the food's plastic, not real.

It's a good thing it's lunchtime, because all that talk about food makes us really hungry. The cooks bring food from the school kitchen to the hall outside our classroom and we serve each other. Today we're having soup,

beef, corn salad, rice, and kimchi. We eat at our desks. Then we clean up and put everything away.

Physical education is the last class of the day. Today the weather's good, so we have class outside.

When I get home at about 1:30, Mother has a sandwich and sweet potatoes ready for me. I'm reading a book about the Bible. Mother says most people in Korea are Buddhists, or Christians, like us. And lots of people believe that spirits exist in every part of nature. If they're treated well they can bring good luck, but if they're not, they can bring sickness and problems. That belief is called shamanism.

I have classes after school, but I have a little time now to play with neighborhood kids before I leave. My friend and I help his little brother learn to kick a football. I guess some people call it a soccer ball.

My first after-school class is math. Our teacher is asking us how many chestnuts are on the plate. Then she asks how many we'd get if she gave each of us the same number of nuts. She says that's division.

While I'm at math, mother practices hitting golf balls. I guess some women in Korea become teachers or sell things in the markets, but most of my friend's mothers are like mine, they stay home and take care of us.

Mother walks to art class with me. I'm learning to look at things very carefully when I try to draw something, even something as simple as a paper bag.

While I'm in art class, Mother shops for dinner. She buys food every day so it will be fresh. She's getting crabs and beef as a special treat, because my aunt and cousins are coming for dinner tonight. She buys fresh food at the outdoor market, but she gets other things in the supermarket. Mother pays for the groceries with won. The checkout person takes our address so the store can deliver the groceries to our apartment when we get home.

I have math and art classes three times a week, but I do TaeKwonDo every day. My teacher says it's a set of ancient Korean exercises for the mind and body for self-defense or attack. The different colored belts we wear show how much we've learned. This girl has just earned a red belt.

My sister picks me up from class. When we get to our apartment, we ring the doorbell, and mother can see and hear us at the door.

My aunt and cousins have come early so my aunt can help Mother cook.

But first Mother helps me get cleaned up.

My aunt is pouring a special sauce on the beef before it's cooked. Then she puts rice and beans in dishes for each person.

We eat at about 8 o'clock. Dad doesn't get home from work until 9, so we always eat before he does. We're having crabs, beef, vegetables, kimchi, and rice and beans.

After dinner, my cousins and I play video games until it's time for them to go home. My cousin wants to be a computer software designer. He says Korea is one of the world's leaders in computer technology.

After they leave I do homework for a half-hour.

My sister, Pora, usually studies from early morning until after 10:30 at night. She wants to be a doctor, so needs to do well in entrance tests to get into good schools. Tonight she's taking a break, learning to sew a purse.

When Dad gets home at about 9 o'clock, we keep him company while he eats. I do some reading, while father and mom catch up on what's happened today.

Then it's bedtime. It's been a busy day!  
Goodnight!

## **Glossary**

### **Chinese characters:**

Symbols used by the Chinese to represent ideas. Most people know about five thousand characters and they can be combined to form many other words.

### **democratic:**

A government where decisions are made by the people of the country, either directly or by electing representatives.

### **factory:**

A building where many people work to make things for sale.

### **golf:**

A sport where one tries to get a small golf ball into a hole by striking it with clubs.

### **kimchi:**

Many kinds of pickled vegetables that are eaten as side dishes during Korean meals.

### **Persimmons:**

A reddish sweet fruit about the size of a tomato.

### **traditional:**

Doing things the way it has always been done.

### **Totem poles:**

Tall poles carved with the animal figures that a tribe feels close to.

### **won:**

The official unit of Korean currency.

## Discussion After Viewing

- Ask each child to list some of the similarities and differences between their family and school and those in the video.
- Invite someone from Korea to talk with the class about growing up in Korea, to tell Korean stories, or do a Korean craft.
- Ask the children to describe the weather they saw in the video. Look at a map or globe, pick countries south and north of Korea, and ask the children to discuss whether the (average) temperatures in those places would likely be warmer or cooler than Korea. Then check an atlas or the internet to see how accurate the guesses are.
- Ask young children to draw several outdoor activities that children in Korea can do in the wintertime. Ask the children to draw several activities that Korean children can do outdoors in the summertime. Have the children share their pictures with the class and discuss why the activities are different.
- Korea is one of the leading countries in advanced technologies. Did the children see any evidence of that fact in the video?
- Ask the children to guess how old is the history of Korea.
- The young man in the city works many hours. Ask how many hours a week do the parents of the children in your class work?

## Questions

1. What are chopsticks?
2. What are totem poles?
3. When was paper first made?
4. How is rice grown?
5. Why is it hard to make a living by farming?
6. Why does Korea have the most people per area of land?
7. Why do most Korean mothers stay at home?
8. What is kimchi?

## Answers to Questions

1. What are chopsticks?

Chopsticks are two equal length of sticks used in East Asia to eat food. People in Korea, Japan, China and Vietnam use them.

2. What are totem poles?

A **totem** is an object, usually an animal, that is revered by members of a particular social group because of a special relationship that exists with that group. The totem and the spirit it embodies represents the bond of unity within a tribe, a clan, or some similar group. Generally, the members of the group believe that they are descended from a totem ancestor, or that they and the totem are “brothers.” The totem may be regarded as a group symbol and as a protector of the members of the group. The symbol of the totem may be tattooed on the body, engraved on weapons, pictured in masks, or carved on totem poles.

3. When was paper first made?

Paper was first made in China during the first century of the Common Era, using much the same techniques seen in the video

4. How is rice grown?

Rice seeds are first grown in small containers that are easy to protect against insects, wind and the elements. The rice field is then made ready by plowing and flooding. After 30 to 50 days, the seedlings are transplanted by hand or machine to the fields, which have been flooded by rain or river water. During the growing season, irrigation is maintained by dike-controlled canals or by hand watering. The fields are allowed to drain before cutting.

5. Why is it hard to make a living by farming?

The returns from farming small pieces of land are not very high. To make as much money as a factory worker, the farmer would need a lot more land. There is not enough land in Korea to support many farmers

6. Why does Korea have the most people per area of land?

Korea is one of those countries which had already been fairly densely populated using traditional technology. With the introduction of better health care, the number of children surviving to adulthood increased dramatically. Where maybe 2 out of 6 children would survive, the number soon approached 100 per cent. The people did not expect the change to happen so fast. Only in the current generation are Korean couples having only two children.

7. Why do most Korean mothers stay at home?

Koreans feel that the most important duty of a mother is the care of the household, and the education of the children. They are very traditional about the role of men and women. Men are supposed to be superior to women.

8. What is kimchi?

Kimchi is a national dish of Korea. It is made of cabbages with many seasoning that is then pickled. In the old days, this was the only vegetable available during the winter. It has been found that the ingredients of garlic, radish, powdered red pepper, sliced green onions, salt and sugar is very healthy. That and its tastiness has led to its introduction to many countries.

## **Introduction**

South Korea is famous for being one of the four Dragons of East Asia, in reference to its stellar economic performance over the last 40 years. It is also well known as the land of kimchee and taekwondo. It is the home of the 2002 World Cup of soccer.

## **The Land and the Climate**

South Korea lies in the southern part of a peninsula that juts out from China. It is about the size of Indiana or Portugal. It is a mountainous country, with coastal plains in the west and the south. The Taebaek mountain range runs from north to south down the eastern coast. Other ranges run from the northeast to the southwest. There are many islands on the western coast, where the shore slopes gently into the Yellow Sea

The climate is continental with cold winters and hot summers. While it is at the same latitude as Madrid it is much colder. The average monthly temperature in January in Seoul is 23 degrees Fahrenheit. The summer monsoons are responsible for 70% of the rainfall.

Only in the demilitarized zone do tigers, leopards and bears still remain. A reforestation program has succeeded in replanting the mountains.

## **The People**

The Korean people are fairly homogeneous. The labor force totals 20 million of which 52% are in service, 27% in mining and manufacturing and 21% in agriculture, fishery and forestry. Most Koreans work ten hour days and five and a half days a week. Their income level is considered middle income on par with Portugal or Greece. South Korea is one of the most densely populated nations in the world. Because the country is also mountainous, there is a shortage of land. Most people live in apartments.

The traditional Korean meal has many side dishes, a bowl of rice and soup. There are many different types of side dishes: kimchee (a spicy, fermented cabbage dish), vegetables cooked in different styles, boiled dishes flavored with soy sauce, grilled meat or fish, pan-fried meat or fish, and raw fish or seafood. Koreans have traditionally enjoyed singing and dancing. Karaoke singing is a favorite. With greater affluence and a growing number of people

who can afford cars, a great deal of choices are available for leisure activities. There is a professional baseball and soccer league. Foreign travel is becoming more popular.

Koreans are still fairly conservative. Most management jobs are held by men. Women are only beginning to get more equal rights in inheritance, custody and divorce. Divorce though increasing is discouraged.

## **History**

The Korean people appears to have come to Korea through the southern Siberian and Manchuria region. Stone age artifacts found in Korea show similarity to those of the Lake Baykal region. The Korean language belongs to the Altaic family and is related to Mongolian and Turkish. By 3000 BCE, Neolithic people were living in Korea. Bronze working and agriculture were known by 1000 BCE. It is highly probable that there was a lot of contact during this period with the numerous technologically more advanced states in what is now China. Many tribal leagues arose in the area from southern Manchuria to Korean peninsula.

Chinese expansion during the Han dynasty brought Han colonies to a part of Korea in 108 BCE. Other tribal leagues gradually evolved into three kingdoms, Koguryo, Paekche and Silla. Soon they forced out the Han, and for six hundred years a balance of power was maintained. Among the developments of this period is the adoption of Chinese as the medium of writing. All scholars were expected to read Chinese characters. Buddhism was also transmitted to the Korean peninsula through China. Korea also exerted a great influence on the neighboring cultures in Japan.

In the seventh century CE, the Chinese under the Sui and later the Tang tried to conquer Koguryo, the northernmost of the three kingdoms, and failed. The Tang Chinese then joined with one of the other states, Silla, to defeat the two others. Silla then drove out the Chinese and unified the peninsula under one rule. North of the peninsula, another Korean state thrived for a while before disappearing from history.

A very hierarchical society evolved under the absolute monarchy of the Silla. It fell in 892, weakened by conflicts over succession and rebellions. The Koryo dynasty ruled from 935 to 1392. During Koryo rule, one of the

major development in Korean history occurred in the development of the movable type printing in 1234, which led to many publications. The Koryo period also saw the invasion of the Mongols in 1231, with whom Koryo battled for 30 years. The Koryo finally had to accept tributary status to the Mongols. As aristocrats gradually controlled all the land and the government received less tax revenues, the Koryo dynasty fell.

In 1392, the Yi dynasty was established; it was to rule until the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1911. Among the great achievements of the dynasty was the development in 1443 of the Korean Hangeul phonetic alphabet to aid in the literacy of the people. During the Yi dynasty, the country faced many invasions. In 1592, the military ruler of Japan invaded Korea. The Koreans with the help of the Ming Chinese repulsed them. It was in this war that the Koreans unveiled the first armored ships. The ships, called turtle ships, were encased in metal armor.

In 1637, the Manchus captured Seoul and soon conquered China. The Yi dynasty again acceded to a tributary status to the Manchus. Commerce greatly expanded in Korea, as did agricultural production with the adoption of advances in farming and new crops from the Americas. In the nineteenth century, contact with Western powers created pressure for change, and funding for modernization increased the tax burden on the farmers. Peasant rebellion and a divided leadership led first to interference by China and Japan and later to outright annexation by Japan when it defeated China in war.

Japanese rule was oppressive and exploitative. The Japanese government forced all the Koreans to take Japanese names and all schooling was in Japanese. Only with the end of the Second World War did the Koreans regain their freedom. But the end of the war brought first partition along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to allow for the separate surrender of Japanese troops to Soviet and American forces. Then the North Korean forces, supplied by the Soviets sought to unify the country militarily. The Korean War embroiled both China and the United States. Over 2 million civilians as well as 1 million Korean soldiers from both sides perished in the war. Between a third to a half of all housing, infrastructure and industry was also destroyed.

After an initial period of uncertainty, the military took over the government and won the support of the people by providing effective government and rapid economic growth through export-led manufacturing. High investment

in education, government supported financing for the creation of giant manufacturing conglomerates, and hard work led to double-digit economic growth for 25 years. In recent years, the Korean economy has been led by development and production of cellular phones, flat screen displays and semiconductors. By 1988, the country was prosperous enough to host a very successful Seoul Olympics. In 1993, the country emerged from military dominated rule and elected its first civilian president in almost 37 years. In 2002, Korea hosted the Soccer World Cup jointly with Japan and its team advanced to the semi-finals. Today, Korea is a thriving democracy with a multi-party system of government. There has been some effort to engage with North Korea, and tension on the peninsula is lower than in the recent past.

## Korea, South



## Korea, South

### Introduction

**Background:** Following World War II, a republic was set up in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula while a communist government was installed in the north. Between 1950 and 1953, US and other UN forces intervened to defend South Korea from North Korean attacks supported by the Chinese; an armistice was signed in 1953. Thereafter, South Korea achieved amazing economic growth, with per capita income rising to 13 times the level of North Korea. In 1997, the nation suffered a severe financial crisis from which it continues to make a solid recovery. South Korea has also maintained its commitment to democratize its political processes.

## Geography

**Location:** Eastern Asia, southern half of the Korean Peninsula bordering the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea

**Geographic coordinates:** 37 00 N, 127 30 E

**Map references:** Asia

**Area:**

*total:* 98,480 sq km

*land:* 98,190 sq km

*water:* 290 sq km

**Area - comparative:** slightly larger than Indiana

**Land boundaries:**

*total:* 238 km

*border countries:* North Korea 238 km

**Coastline:** 2,413 km

**Maritime claims:**

*contiguous zone:* 24 nm

*continental shelf:* not specified

*exclusive economic zone:* 200 nm

*territorial sea:* 12 nm; between 3 nm and 12 nm in the Korea Strait

**Climate:** temperate, with rainfall heavier in summer than winter

**Terrain:** mostly hills and mountains; wide coastal plains in west and south

**Elevation extremes:**

*lowest point:* Sea of Japan 0 m

*highest point:* Halla-san 1,950 m

**Natural resources:** coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, hydropower potential

**Land use:**

*arable land:* 19%

*permanent crops:* 2%

*permanent pastures:* 1%

*forests and woodland:* 65%

*other:* 13% (1993 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 8,780 sq km (2005 est.)

**Natural hazards:** occasional typhoons bring high winds and floods; low-level seismic activity common in southwest

**Environment - current issues:** air pollution in large cities; water pollution from the discharge of sewage and industrial effluents; drift net fishing

## People

**Population:** 48,470,969 (July 2009 est.)

**Age structure:**

*0-14 years:* 16.8% (male 4,278,520; female 3,867,688)

*15-64 years:* 72.3%

*65 years and over:* 10.8%

**Population growth rate:** 0.266% (2009 est.)

**Birth rate:** 8.93 births/1,000 population (2009 est.)

**Death rate:** 5.94 deaths/1,000 population (2009 est.)

**Net migration rate:** -0.33 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2009 est.)

**Sex ratio:**

*at birth:* 1.07 male(s)/female

*under 15 years:* 1.10 male(s)/female

*15-64 years:* 1.04 male(s)/female

*65 years and over:* 0.67 male(s)/female

*total population:* 1.01 male(s)/female (2009 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 7.85 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

*total population:* 78.72 years

*male:* 75.45 years

*female:* 82.22 years (2009 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 1.21 children born/woman (2009 est.)

**Nationality:**

*noun:* Korean(s)

*adjective:* Korean

**Ethnic groups:** homogeneous (except for about 20,000 Chinese)

**Religions:** Christian 26%, Buddhist 23%, Confucianist 3%, Shamanist, Chondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), and none 49%

**Languages:** Korean, English widely taught in junior high and high school

**Literacy:**

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write

*total population:* 98%

*male:* 99.3%

*female:* 96.7% (2005 est.)

## Government

**Country name:**

*conventional long form:* Republic of Korea (Taehan-min'guk)

*conventional short form:* South Korea

*note:* the South Koreans generally use the term "Han-guk" to refer to their country

*abbreviation:* ROK

**Government type:** republic

**Capital:** Seoul

**Administrative divisions:** 9 provinces (do, singular and plural) and 6 special cities\* (gwangyoksi, singular and plural); Cheju-do, Cholla-bukto, Cholla-namdo, Ch'ungch'ong-bukto, Ch'ungch'ong-namdo, Inch'on-gwangyoksi\*, Kangwon-do, Kwangju-gwangyoksi\*, Kyonggi-do, Kyongsang-bukto, Kyongsang-namdo, Pusan-gwangyoksi\*, Soul-t'ukpyolsi\*, Taegu-gwangyoksi\*, Taejon-gwangyoksi\*

**Independence:** 15 August 1945, date of liberation from Japanese colonial rule

**National holiday:** Liberation Day, 15 August (1945)

**Constitution:** 25 February 1988

**Legal system:** combines elements of continental European civil law systems, Anglo-American law, and Chinese classical thought

**Suffrage:** 20 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

*chief of state:* President

*head of government:* Prime Minister

*cabinet:* State Council appointed by the president on the prime minister's recommendation

*elections:* president elected by popular vote for a single five-year term;

**Legislative branch:** unicameral National Assembly or Kukhoe (299 seats)

**Judicial branch:** Supreme Court, justices are appointed by the president subject to the consent of the National Assembly

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

*chancery:* 2450 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

*telephone:* [1] (202) 939-5600

*FAX:* [1] (202) 387-0205

*consulate(s) general:* Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Honolulu,

Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle  
*consulate(s):* Agana (Guam)

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

*embassy:* 82 Sejong-Ro, Chongro-ku, Seoul

*mailing address:* American Embassy, Unit 15550, APO AP 96205-0001

*telephone:* [82] (2) 397-4114

*FAX:* [82] (2) 738-8845

**Flag description:** white with a red (top) and blue yin-yang symbol in the center; there is a different black trigram from the ancient I Ching (Book of Changes) in each corner of the white field

## Economy

**Economy - overview:** Since the 1960s, South Korea has achieved an incredible record of growth and global integration to become a high-tech industrialized economy. Four decades ago, GDP per capita was comparable with levels in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia. In 2004, South Korea joined the trillion dollar club of world economies, and currently is among the world's twenty largest economies. Initially, this success was achieved by a system of close government and business ties including directed credit and import restrictions. The government promoted the import of raw materials and technology at the expense of consumer goods, and encouraged savings and investment over consumption. The Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 exposed longstanding weaknesses in South Korea's development model including high debt/equity ratios and massive foreign borrowing. GDP plunged by 6.9% in 1998, then recovered by 9% in 1999-2000. Korea adopted numerous economic reforms following the crisis, including greater openness to foreign investment and imports. Growth moderated to about 4-5% annually between 2003 and 2007. With the global economic downturn in late 2008, South Korean GDP growth slowed to 2.2% in 2008 and declined 0.8% in 2009. In the third quarter of 2009, the economy began to recover, in large part due to export growth, low interest rates, and an expansionary fiscal policy. The South Korean economy's long term challenges include a rapidly aging population, inflexible labor market, and overdependence on manufacturing exports to drive economic growth..

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$1,343 billion (2009 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** -0.8% (2009 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$27,700 (2007 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:**

*agriculture:* 3%

*industry: 40%*

*services: 57% (2007 est.)*

**Population below poverty line: 15% (2003 est)**

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

*lowest 10%: NA%*

*highest 10%: NA%*

**Inflation rate (consumer prices): 2.5% (2007 est.)**

**Labor force: 24 million (2009)**

**Labor force - by occupation:** services and other 68%, mining and manufacturing 20%, agriculture, fishing, forestry 12% (2009)

**Unemployment rate: 4.1% (2009 est.)**

**Industries:** electronics, automobile production, chemicals, shipbuilding, steel, textiles, clothing, footwear, food processing

**Agriculture - products:** rice, root crops, barley, vegetables, fruit; cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs; fish

**Exports: \$355 billion (f.o.b., 2009)**

**Exports - commodities:** electronic products, machinery and equipment, motor vehicles, steel, ships; textiles, fish

**Exports - partners:** China 22%, US 12%, Japan 7%, Hong Kong 5%, Taiwan 4% (2009)

**Imports: \$313 billion (c.i.f., 2009)**

**Imports - commodities:** machinery, electronics and electronic equipment, oil, steel, transport equipment, textiles, organic chemicals, grains

**Imports - partners:** China 17.7%, Japan 14%, US 8.9%, Saudi Arabia 7.8%, UAE 4.4% (2009)

**Currency:** 1 South Korean won (W) = 100 chun (theoretical)

**Exchange rates:** South Korean won (W) per US\$1 – 1296 (2009); 1,101 (2008); 1,188.82 (1999), 771.27 (1995)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

## **Communications**

**Telephones - main lines in use: 21 million (2009)**

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 45 million (2009)

## Websites

[korea.insights.co.kr/english/index.html](http://korea.insights.co.kr/english/index.html)

[www.knto.or.kr/english/index.html](http://www.knto.or.kr/english/index.html)

## Recipes

Persimmon punch “sujunggwa”

A popular traditional drink in Korea in winter. It is also a healthy drink which contains lots of vitamin C.

Ingredients (4 servings)

10 dried persimmons, 1/3 lb. ginger, 1/4 oz. stick cinnamon

13 cups water, 2 cups sugar, 2 tbsp. pine nuts

### Instructions

1. Remove the seeds from the dried persimmons and replace them with four or five pine nuts.
2. Wash and scrape the ginger and slice it thinly. Simmer the ginger and stick cinnamon with the water until the strong taste draws well.
3. Add the sugar and briefly boil again.
4. Pour this syrup over the dried persimmons in a large bowl.
5. When the persimmons are soft, serve them adding the syrupy liquid and sprinkling whole pine nuts on the top of each serving. **Hint: cool the drink and you can get much better taste!!**

## Activities

Make a Korean knotted decorative pendant called maaedup  
They are often hung on chests of drawers and can be used as part of a woman's traditional dress.

### Items required

12 pieces of colored yarn 10 inches long

1 piece of yarn 5 inches long

safety scissors

1 tagboard strip 6 inches

colored marking pens

glue

stapler

- Step 1. Decorate with loops and flowers a piece of paper the size of  
The tagboard and glue
- Step 2. Line up 5 piece of yarn and fold them in half
- Step 3. Tie them together with another piece of yarn
- Step 4. Make a second tassel in the same way
- Step 5. Staple the tassels to the bottom of the pendant
- Step 6. Staple the smaller piece of yarn in a loop at the top of the  
pendant