Korean Transliteration, Geographic Units, and Proper Names

The Korean language presents a number of problems for transliteration, because a couple of different systems are used at the same time. The most common schemes now in use are the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism's system, the McCune-Reischauer system, and the North Korean system. The Center for Nonproliferation Studies uses the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism's system in the North Korea and South Korea country profiles, and its other work. However, exceptions have been made for names of public figures, and proper names of localities, firms, geographic units, publications, and organizations due to their continued popular usage. The original Hangeul names of places, organizations, and facilities, etc., have been included in parentheses throughout the profile; however, this text is illegible for browsers without the proper fonts or encoding.

Tables for the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism's system:

Consonants – Plosives

Hangeul	Alphabet (When vowel is following)	Alphabet (When vowel is not following)
ㄱ	g	k
ㄲ	kk	k
ㅋ	k	k
ㄷ	d	t
ㄸ	tt	-
ㅌ	t	t
ㅂ	b	p
ㅃ	pp	-
ㅍ	p	p

Consonants – Affricates

Hangeul	Alphabet (When vowel is following)	Alphabet (When vowel is not following)
ㅈ	j	t
ㅉ	jj	-
ㅊ	ch	t

Consonants – Fricatives

Hangeul	Alphabet (When vowel is following)	Alphabet (When vowel is not following)
ㅅ	s	t
ㅆ	ss	t
ㅎ	h	h

Consonants - Nasals

Hangeul	Alphabet (When the consonant is the first sound)	Alphabet (When vowel is following)	Alphabet (When vowel is not following)
ㄴ	n	n	n
ㅁ	m	m	m
ㅇ	(없음)	ng	ng

Consonants – Flowing Sounds

Hangeul	Alphabet (When vowel is following)	Alphabet (When vowel is not following)
ㄹ	r	l

Vowels

Hangeul	Alphabet
ㅏ	a
ㅓ	eo
ㅗ	o
ㅜ	u
ㅡ	eu
ㅣ	i
ㅐ	ae
ㅔ	e
ㅚ	oe
ㅟ	wi

Double Vowels

Hangeul	Alphabet
ㅑ	ya
ㅕ	yeo
ㅛ	yo
ㅠ	yu
ㅒ	yae
ㅖ	ye
ㅘ	wa
ㅙ	wae
ㅝ	wo
ㅞ	we
ㅢ	ui

Geographic Names and Units in Korea

Geographic place names include the administrative unit, except for cities, provinces and mountains. The administrative unit follows the place name, and a hyphen separates the place name and administrative unit. See the following table for an explanation of Korean geographic/administrative units. Note that due to popular usage NTI uses place names "No-dong" rather than "Ro-dong" and "Taepo-dong" rather than "Daepo-dong" also that the place names include hyphens, but the missile names "Nodong" and "Taepodong" do not.

Korean	English	Definition	Examples
노동자구	Nodongjagu	Special administrative districts for mining, forestry or others.	Okpyeong-nodongjagu
동	Dong	Smallest administrative unit of a locality	Hoegi-dong
리	Ri	Village	Musudan-ri
구	Gu	District within a town, village or city	Dongdaemun-gu
읍	Eup	Town	Janggang-eup
군	Gun	County	Hwadae-gun
구역	Guyeok	District	Daeseong-guyeok
지구	Jigu	District	Geumho-jigu
시	Si	City	Ganggye-si
도	Do	Province	Hamgyeonbuk-do
도	Do	Island	Mayang Island
산	San	Mountain	Mt.Geumgang
봉	Bong	Peak	Gukmang Peak

Proper Names, Names of People and Public Figures

Korean names begin with the surname and are followed by the given name. The given name does not have a hyphen between the first and second syllables. "Lee" is used for the common name "李" or "이(South) / 리(North)," and "Park" is used for the common name "朴" or "박."

Alternative spellings that have become standard for public figures are used:

Chung Ju Young (Chung Chu Yŏng) : 정주영
Kim Dae Jung (Kim Tae Chung) : 김대중
Kim Il Sung (Kim Il Sŏng) : 김일성
Kim Jong Il (Kim Chŏng Il) : 김정일
Kim Jong Un : 김정은
Kim Young Sam (Kim Yŏng Sam) : 김영삼
Park Chung Hee (Park Chŏng Hŭi) : 박정희
Rhee Syngman (Lee Sŭng Man) : 이승만
Roh Moo Hyun (No Mu Hyŏn) : 노무현
Roh Tae Woo (No T'ae U) : 노태우
Lee Myung bak (Lee Myeong Bak) : 이명박

Proper Names for Missiles

Nodong (노동)
Taepodong-1 (대포동 1 호)
Taepodong-2 (대포동 2 호)
Hwasong-5 (화성 5 호)
Hwasong-6 (화성 6 호)
Musudan (무수단)

Proper Names for Publications

NTI utilizes the same spellings adopted by major publications, even though it may not follow the rules of transliteration mentioned above. The following is a list of common news publications found in the North Korea and South Korea country profiles:

Chosun Ilbo (Chosŏn Ilbo) : 조선일보
Chugan Chosun (Chugan Chosŏn) : 주간조선
Donga Ilbo (Tong'a Ilbo) : 동아일보
Hankook Ilbo (Han'guk Ilbo) : 한국일보
Hankyoreh 21 (Han'gyŏre 21) : 한겨레 21
Hankyoreh Sinmun (Han'gyŏre Shinmun) : 한겨레 신문
Joongang Ilbo (Chung'ang Ilbo) : 중앙일보
Kook Bang Ilbo (Kukpang Ilbo) : 국방일보
Kukmin Ilbo (Kungmin Ilbo) : 국민일보
Kwahak Donga (Kwahak Tong'a) : 과학동아
Kyunghyang Shinmun (Kyŏnghyang Shinmun) : 경향신문
Minju Joson (Minju Chosŏn) : 민주 조선
Munhwa Ilbo : 문화일보
Rodong Sinmun (Rodong Shinmun) : 로동신문
Segye Ilbo : 세계일보
Seoul Sinmun (Sŏul Shinmun) : 서울신문
Shindonga (Shindong'a) : 신동아
Wolgan Chosun (Wŏlgan Chosŏn) : 월간 조선

The McCune-Reischauer Transliteration System

NTI no longer uses the McCune-Reischauer system, in part because many browsers do not support the transliteration of vowels easily. Below are tables of the McCune-Reischauer Transliteration System. More information on this system can be found here.

Vowels

모음	ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ	ㅘ	ㅝ	ㅐ	ㅔ	ㅚ	ㅟ	ㅢ	ㅙ	ㅞ	ㅒ	ㅖ
Vowel	a	ya	ŏ	yŏ	o	yo	u	yu	ŭ	i	wa	wŏ	ae	e *	oe	wi	ŭi	wae	we	yae	ye

* e – written as ë after ㅏ and ㅗ

Consonants

		ㅇ (†)	ㄱ K	ㄴ N	ㄷ T	ㄹ (R)	ㅁ M	ㅂ P	ㅅ S	ㅈ CH/J	ㅊ CH'	ㅋ K'	ㅌ T'	ㅍ P'	ㅎ H
		Initial consonant of the next syllable													
Final consonant	ㅇ **N G**	NG	NGG	NGN	NGD	NGN	NGM	NGB	NGS	NGJ	NGCH'	NGK'	NGT'	NGP'	NGH
	ㄱ **K**	G	KK	NGN	KT	NGN	NGM	KP	KS	KCH	KCH'	KK'	KT'	KP'	KH
	ㄴ **N**	N	N'G	NN	ND	LL	NM	NB	NS	NJ	NCH'	NK'	NT'	NP'	NH
	ㄹ **L**	R	LG	LL	LD	LL	LM	LB	LS	LCH	LCH'	LK'	LT'	LP'	RH
	ㅁ **M**	M	MG	MN	MD	MN	MM	MB	MS	MJ	MCH'	MK'	MT'	MP'	MH
	ㅂ **P**	B	PK	MN	PT	MN	MM	PP	PS	PCH	PCH'	PK'	PT'	PP'	PH

† An initial consonant before a vowel to indicate absence of sound.

When deciding whether *g* or *k*, *b* or *p*, *d* or *t* and *j* or *ch* is used, use *g, b, d* or *j* if it is voiced, and *k, p, t* or *ch* if it is not. Pronunciations such as these take precedence over the rules in the table above.

Double Consonants

쌍자음	ㄲ	ㄸ	ㅃ	ㅆ	ㅉ	ㄳ	ㄵ	ㄶ	ㄺ	ㄻ	ㄼ	ㄽ	ㄾ	ㄿ	ㅀ	ㅄ
Double Consonants	kk	ss	tch	Ks(h)	nj	n	lg	n	lg	lm	lb	ls(h)	lt	lp'	l	Bs(h)