

LEVEL 4 LESSON 12

In this lesson, we are going to look at the sentence structure **-아/어/여 보다** [-a/eo/yeo bo-da] and how it is used.

Basic meaning

-아/어/여 보다 basically means **“to try doing something”**.

If you break down the structure, it is comprised of two parts. -아/어/여 [-a/eo/yeo] and 보다 [bo-da]. -아/어/여 is the basic suffix that you use after verb stems, and 보다 means “to see”. The literal translation of -아/어/여 보다 is “to do something and see (what happens)”, so the idiomatic meaning is “to try doing something” or “to give something a try.”

Verb conjugation examples:

Ex 1)

쓰다 [sseu-da] = to use

--> 쓰 + -어 보다 = 써 보다 [sseo bo-da] = to try using something

이거 써 봤어요? [i-geo sseo bwa-sseo-yo?] = Have you tried using this?

Ex 2)

들어가다 [deu-reo-ga-da] = to enter, to go in

--> 들어가 + -아 보다 = 들어가 보다 [deu-reo-ga bo-da] = to try going in

들어가 볼까요? [deu-reo-ga bol-kka-yo?] = Shall we try going in (and see what it's like)?

Ex 3)

하다 [ha-da] = to do

--> 하 + -어 보다 = 해 보다 [hae bo-da] = to try doing something

이거 해 보고 싶어요. [i-geo hae bo-go si-peo-yo.] = I want to try doing this.

Fixed expressions and verbs containing -아/어/여 보다

Since -아/어/여 보다 is a very commonly used structure, some verbs are very commonly used in the -아/어/여 보다 structure, and some other verbs are actually already in the form of -아/어/여 보다. And in that case, since -아/어/여 보다 is part of the verbs, the space between -아/어/여 and 보다 is not even necessary.

LEVEL 4 LESSON 12

1. 물어보다 [mu-reo-bo-da] vs 물어 보다 [mu-reo bo-da]
 - 물어보다 = to ask
 - 물어 보다 = to try asking (묻다 + 보다)
2. 알아보다 [a-ra-bo-da] vs 알아 보다 [a-ra bo-da]
 - 알아보다 = to look into something, to recognize
 - 알아 보다 (x)
3. 지켜보다 [ji-kyeo-bo-da] vs 지켜 보다 [ji-kyeo bo-da]
 - 지켜보다 = to keep a watchful eye on someone/something
 - 지켜 보다 (x)

Sample sentences

1. 이거 먹어 봐요.
[i-geo meo-geo bwa-yo.]
= Try eating this. / Try some of this.
2. 저도 거기 안 가 봤어요.
[jeo-do geo-gi an ga bwa-sseo-yo.]
= I haven't been there yet, either. / I haven't tried going there, either.
3. 제가 먼저 해 볼게요.
[je-ga meon-jeo hae bol-ge-yo.]
= I will try doing it first. / I will give it a try first.
4. 누구한테 물어볼까요?
[nu-gu-han-te mu-reo-bol-kka-yo?]
= Whom shall I ask?
5. 제가 알아볼게요.
[je-ga a-ra-bol-ge-yo.]
= I'll look into it.