

## LEVEL 2 LESSON 18

In the previous lesson we learned how to say that you "can" and "cannot" do something. In this lesson, let us look at how to say that you are "good at" or "bad at" doing something.

The basic construction for saying "to do something" is [object] + **-을/를 (= object marker) + 하다** (= to do), and to this, you add **잘** [jal] or **못** [mot].

**~을/를 잘 하다** = to be good at ~ (lit. to do ~ well)

**~을/를 못 하다** = to be poor at ~ (lit. to do ~ poorly)

### Examples

노래 [no-rae] = singing, song

노래를 잘 하다 [no-rae-reul jal ha-da] = to be good at singing, to sing well

요리 [yo-ri] = cooking, dish

요리를 못 하다 [yo-ri-reul mot ha-da] = to be poor at cooking, to cook poorly

But since 못 하다 can also mean "to be unable to do" something or "can not do" something, 잘 [jal] is often added in front of this and makes it 잘 못 하다, to make the meaning clear. By saying 잘 못 하다, you literally say that you "can not do something well" or "are unable to do something well", which is similar to being poor at it.

요리를 못 하다 = "to be poor at cooking" OR "can not cook"

요리를 잘 못 하다 = "to be poor at cooking"

### More examples

수영 [su-yeong] = swimming

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수영을 **잘 하다** [su-yeong-eul jal ha-da]

= to be good at swimming

수영을 **못 하다** [su-yeong-eul mot ha-da]

= to be bad at swimming

OR

= can not swim

수영을 **잘 못** 하다 [su-yeong-eul jal mot ha-da]

= to be bad at swimming

### Are 잘 and 못 (or 잘 못) only used with -하다 verbs?

No. Other types of verbs can be used with 잘 and 못 as well. Since the first parts of most -하다 verbs are nouns, it is easy to detach the noun part from -하다 and add 잘, 못, or 잘 못 in between, but for other types of verbs that are not in the "noun + -하다" form, you just add 잘, 못, or 잘 못 in front of the verb.

잘 달리다 = to run well, to be good at running

잘 쓰다 = to write well, to be good at writing

But when a verb is used only on their own like this, very often, the meaning isn't very clear, (i.e. 쓰다 can be both 'to write' and 'to use') and the phrase sounds incomplete, so a noun is added to the phrase to go in pairs with the verb.

**잘 달리다 --> 달리기를 잘 하다**

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[lit. "to do running well"]

Here, 달리다 was changed to its noun form, 달리기 and was followed by 잘 하다.

### 잘 쓰다 --> 글씨를 잘 쓰다

[lit. "to write writing/letters well"]

Here, the word 글씨, meaning "writing" or "letters" was used to make the meaning of "writing" more clear, and prevent people from thinking that it might mean "to use".

### Sample sentences

저는 노래를 잘 못 해요. [jeo-neun no-rae-reul jal mot hae-yo.]

= I can't sing well. / I'm not good at singing.

제 친구는 수영을 잘 해요. [je chin-gu-neun su-yeong-eul jal hae-yo.]

= My friend is good at swimming.

저는 퍼즐을 잘 풀어요. [jeo-neun peo-jeu-reul jal pu-reo-yo.]

= I am good at solving puzzles.

저는 글씨를 잘 못 써요. [jeo-neun geul-ssi-reul jal mot sseo-yo.]

= My handwriting is not good.

저는 글을 잘 못 써요. [jeo-neun geu-reul jal mot sseo-yo.]

= I'm not good at writing.

매운 거 잘 먹어요? [mae-un geo jal meo-geo-yo?]

= Are you good at eating spicy food?