In this lesson, we are looking at the **object marking particles**. As we mentioned a few times through our previous lessons, there are different types of particles in Korean, and these particles (subject marking particles, topic marking particles, location marking particles, and so on) are what make it easy to understand Korean sentences, even when the word order changes.

But more often than not, when the meaning of a certain sentence can be still very clear WITH-OUT using a certain particle, Korean speakers like to drop the particle and just not say it. Like many other rules in speaking Korean, this is also for the ease of pronunciation and for the shortening of the phrase.

So far, we have looked at many verbs. Verbs can be divided into transitive verbs (verbs that need objects) and intransitive verbs (verbs that do not need objects), and in English this is much more clear because even when a noun is repeatedly referred to (i. e. "Did you find your wallet? / Yes, I found it.), you do not get rid of the part that refers to "the wallet" - you still have it there by saying "it" instead of "the wallet".

But in Korean, since the same mini dialog as above will often go like this: **"지갑 찾았어요?** (literal translation: "wallet found?" / **네. 찾았어요**. (literal translation: "yes. found."), the distinction between transitive verbs and intransitive verbs is not as strong as in English and many other languages.

And that's where object marking particles come in to play.

Object marking particles:

을 [eul] - used after a noun ending in a **consonant**

를 [reul] - used after a noun ending in a **vowel**

What does an object marking partcle do?

In English, if you write "an apple" and do not write the verb that goes with it, there is no way for you to tell what kind of role it is going to take in a sentence.

But in Korean, even if you do not write or say the verb, just by adding the right particle after the noun, you can express the role of the noun or pronoun even before you say the verb.

"An apple" - in English, it's completely neutral as is.

"사과" - in Korean, as is, it's neutral too.

"사과를" - even if you don't say the verb, you know that 사과 is going to be the **OBJECT** of the verb.

So you can predict the verbs to an extent - "eat an apple, buy an apple, sell an apple, find an apple, throw an apple, draw an apple, etc."

" 사과가" - you know that 사과 is going to be the **SUBJECT** of the verb.

You can predict the verbs here as well - "the apple is good, is bad, is expensive, will be big, was small, can be good for health, etc."

" 사과는" - you know that the speaker is going to say something about 사과 in comparison to other things or bring up the topic of 사과 for the first time.

How object marking particles are dropped

If you want to translate "What did you do yesterday?" literally using all the elements, it's very unnatural in Korean.

= "어제 <the name of the other person> **씨는 뭐를 했어요?"**

So, unless you are talking about a THIRD person, you don't need to say the name of the other person here, so it becomes

= "어제 뭐를 했어요?"

And since it's also clear that "뭐" (= what) is NOT the subject of the sentence, (it's the PERSON that did WHAT, not the other way around) you can drop 를 there.

= "어제 뭐 했어요?"

When do you need to use object marking particles?

You need to use them when you want to clarify the relation between the object word and the verb. When the object and the verb are close, it's very easy. You can either add the particle or not. It doesn't make too much difference. But when the object word is far away from the verb, the relation or the connection between the words are weakened, so you need the particle to be used to make the meaning clear.

텔레비전 봐요. = I watch TV.

↓

텔레비전 봐요? = Do you watch TV?

↓

텔레비전 자주 봐요? = Do you watch TV often?

↓

텔레비전(을) 일주일에 몇 번 봐요? = How many times a week do you watch TV?

As the object of the setnences (텔레비전) gets further and further away from the verb (봐요), you need to make the relation of the words clearer by using the object marking particle.