

Korean

No romanization system for Korean has been approved at the United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names, although systems for the romanization of Korean have been presented at several sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Experts at the sessions have repeatedly expressed their wish that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea should continue their efforts in aspiring to agree on a single international system for the romanization of Korean geographical names.

In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea there is a national system adopted in 1992 and presented to the 17th session of UNGEGN in 1994, updated version was published in 2002 and 2012.¹

In the Republic of Korea the Ministry of Culture and Tourism adopted in July 2000 a new system of romanization for Korean² which superseded another system approved in 1984. A new document was submitted in 2006 to confirm the new system of romanization for Korean.³ The system has been implemented in the Republic of Korea.

The most widely used international system is that of McCune-Reischauer (1939), which was adopted by the BGN and the PCGN in 1945 but is now used by those organizations only for the romanization of names in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (for names in the Republic of Korea the BGN and the PCGN now use that country’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism system).⁴

A transliteration system that was provisionally agreed upon by the ISO experts of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, is given in ISO TR 11941:1996 (a provisional technical report, not enforced as a standard).⁵

In linguistics also the so-called Yale system of romanization is widely accepted.⁶

Korean uses an alphabetic script in which the characters are grouped graphically together into complex syllable blocks. So, the geographical name P’anmunjŏm is written 판문점, not $\text{ㅍ ㅏ ㄴ ㅁ ㅈ ㅊ ㅁ ㅈ ㅊ ㅁ}$.

Systems of romanization

The following table gives a comparison of all the main romanization systems. The character sequence has been taken from ISO TR 11941, there are variations to this in national usage. Romanization equivalents in the columns are as follows: **1** – ISO TR 11941, **2** – national system of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (1992), **3** – national system of the Republic of Korea (2000), **4** – McCune-Reischauer system (1939), **5** – Yale system of romanization.

	1	2	3	4	5
1	ㅍ k/g	k	g, k ^F	k	k

2	ㅋ	kh/k	kh	k	k'	kh
3	ㆁ	kk/gg	kk	kk	kk	kk
4	ㄷ	t/d	t	d, t ^F	t	t
5	ㅌ	th/t	th	t	t'	th
6	ㄸ	tt/dd	tt	tt	tt	tt
7	ㅍ	p/b	p	b, p ^F	p	p
8	ㅑ	ph/p	ph	p	p'	ph
9	ㅓ	pp/bb	pp	pp	pp	pp
10	ㅕ	c/j	j	j	ch	c
11	ㅗ	ch/c	ch	ch	ch'	ch
12	ㅛ	cc/jj	jj	jj	tch	cc
13	ㅜ	s	s	s	s	s
14	ㅠ	ss	ss	ss	ss	ss
15	ㅎ	h	h	h	h	h
16	ㅇ	, ^A , - ^B , ng ^C	-, ng ^E	-, ng ^E	-, ng ^E	-, ng ^E
17	ㄴ	n	n	n	n	n
18	ㄹ	l, r ^D	r	r, l ^G	r, n, l	l
19	ㅁ	m	m	m	m	m
20	ㅏ	a	a	a	a	a
21	ㅑ	eo	ö	eo	ö	e
22	ㅓ	o	o	o	o	o
23	ㅕ	u	u	u	u	wu
24	ㅡ	eu	ũ	eu	ũ	u
25	ㅣ	i	i	i	i	i
26	ㅞ	ae	ae	ae	ae	ay
27	ㅟ	e	e	e	e	ey
28	ㅠ	oe	oe	oe	oe	oy
29	ㅢ	ya	ya	ya	ya	ya
30	ㅣ	yeo	yö	yeo	yö	ye
31	ㅤ	yo	yo	yo	yo	yo
32	ㅥ	yu	yu	yu	yu	ywu
33	ㅦ	yae	yae	yae	yae	yay
34	ㅧ	ye	ye	ye	ye	yey
35	ㅨ	wa	wa	wa	wa	wa
36	ㅩ	weo	wö	wo	wö	we
37	ㅪ	wi	wi	wi	wi	wuy

38	ㅘ	wae	wae	wae	wae	way
39	ㅙ	we	we	we	we	wey
40	ㅚ	yi	ŭi	ui	ŭi	uy

^A See notes 2, 3 and 4.

^B Word-initially.

^C At the end of a syllable.

^D At the beginning of a syllable.

^E ㅇ is not romanized syllable-initially, syllable-finally it is romanized *ng*.

^F The first romanization equivalent is used when occurring before a vowel, the second equivalent is used when followed by another consonant or if it forms the final sound of a word.

^G ㄹ is romanized as *r* when followed by a vowel, and as *l* when followed by a consonant or when appearing at the end of a word. ㄹㄹ is romanized as *ll*.

There are complicated rules based on pronunciation that determine the conversion of Korean syllables into Roman and the romanizations given in the table reflect only the most typical values. Most changes concern consonants which are often assimilated when used in combinations. The rules differ in the various romanization systems and for reasons of economy these are not reproduced in this report.

Notes to ISO TR 11941: 1996

1. Where there are pairs of romanizations, the first corresponds to Method I and the second to Method II.
2. To avoid ambiguity the apostrophe is used to denote the beginning of the next syllable in a polysyllabic word.
3. By Method I the apostrophe is needed in the following cases:
 1. if the consonant ㅇ is at the initial position of a non-initial syllable of a polysyllabic word: 꽃이 *kkoch'i*, 강에 *kang'e*, 앉아라 *anc'ara*;
 2. if the five double consonants appear at the initial positions of the non-initial syllables of polysyllabic words: 아까 *a'kka*, 흰떡 *hyin'tteok*;
 3. if the four aspirated consonants appear at the initial position of the non-initial syllables of polysyllabic words: 유쾌하다 *yu'khwaehata*;
4. By Method II the apostrophe is needed in the following cases:
 1. if the consonant ㅇ is at the initial position of a non-initial syllable of a polysyllabic word: 꽃이 *ggoc'i*, 강래 *gang'e*, 앉아라 *anj'ara*;
 2. if the five double consonants appear at the initial positions of the non-initial syllables of polysyllabic words: 아까 *a'gga*, 흰떡 *hyin'ddeog*.

References

1. *The Rules of Latin Alphabetic Transcription of Korean Language*. Submitted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012. Document E/CONF.101/CRP15.

2. *New Romanization System of Korean* Submitted by the Republic of Korea. Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Berlin, 27 August – 5 September 2002. Document E/CONF.94/INF.68.
3. *Romanization of Korean*. Submitted by the Republic of Korea. 23rd Session of UNGEGN. Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006. Document W.P. 95.
4. *BGN/PCGN Romanization Systems*, available at: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/romanization.html> and http://www.pcn.org.uk/Romanisation_systems.htm.
5. The summary of it was published at the Internet site <http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/kskim/11941.html>.
6. *The World's Writing Systems*. Edited by Peter T. Daniels and William Bright. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996, pp. 218-227.