Korean Romanization System and Word Division
(Basic Guide)

I. How to use the McCune-Reischauer (M-R) Romanization tables

The upper two rows on the Table 1 (Consonants) show how Korean initial consonants are romanized in English. The two columns on the left show how Korean final consonants are romanized. For example, when used as an initial, the Korean consonant ㅇㅇ ㅇㅇ will be romanized by vowels (i.e. 이것 → Igöt), when used as a final, it is romanized as ‘ng’, (i.e. 성공 → Sŏnggong).

The romanization of vowels is presented in Table 2 (Vowels).

When different initials and finals are combined, some words are romanized differently. The table shows how such changes are made. For example, 달님 달님 달님 달님 has final ㄹㄹ ㄹㄹ and initial ㄴㄴ ㄴㄴ. As the table indicates, ‘-ln-’ will be replaced with ‘-ll-’, and the word will thereby romanized as ‘tallim’ not ‘talnim’.

When a medial final of one syllable is followed by a medial initial of the next syllable, the resulting romanization is shown at the convergence of the grid in the table below. When a box is blank, this means that one should simply use the romanization for each individual element noted beside the Han’gŭl element.

In any case, pronunciation always takes precedence over romanization rules. The round brackets ( ) in the Table 1 indicate that there is more than one commonly used way to romanize the letter. Substitute the “+” signs in the “vowels” column and the “Vowels” row with an appropriate vowel.

Table 1 (Consonants)

| Initial | ㄱ | ㄴ | ㄷ | ㄹ | ㅁ | ㅂ | ㅅ | ㅇ | ㅈ | ㅊ | ㅋ | ㅌ | ㅍ | ㅎ | ㄲ | ㄸ | ㅃ | ㅆ | ㅉ |
| k | n | t | n (r) | m | p | s (sh) | vowels | ch | ch’ | k’ | t’ | p’ | h | kk | tt | pp | ss | tch |
| l | l | n | ng | ng | ngm | m+ | kk |
| m | m | n | ng | ng | ngm | m+ | kk |
| n | n’g | nd | ll (nn) | nb (np) | nj (nch) |
| t | t’ | nn | nm | d+ | ch’ | tt |
| l | ll (lj) | lb | r+ | lch (lj) | rh |
| p | p | mn | mm | b+ | pp |
| m | m (mk) | md (mt) | mn | mb | mj |
| ㅇ | ng | ng | ngd | ngb | ngj |
| ㄴ | t | nn | nm | j+ | ch’ |
| ㄷ | t | nn | nm | j+ |
| ㄹ | k | ng | ng | ngm |
| ㅁ | t | nn | nm | t+ |
| ㅂ | p | nn | mm | p+ | pp |
| ㅅ | t' | k | nn | t’ | ch’ | +g | +d | +b | +j |

Table 2 (Vowels)

| a | i | ㅏ | ㅑ | ㅓ | ㅕ | ㅗ | ㅛ | ㅜ | ㅠ | ㅡ | ㅣ | ㅐ | ㅒ | ㅔ | ㅖ | ㅘ | ㅙ | ㅚ | ㅝ | ㅞ | ㅟ | ㅢ |
| a | y | o | yŏ | o | yŏ | y | u | yu | ū | i | ae | yae | e | ye | wa | wae | oe | wŏ | we | wi | ū |

II. Symbol and Character Modifier

- The apostrophe is used to differentiate aspirated consonants: 콰브 / 꼬보 k’ombŏ / kombo
- The apostrophe is also used to mark transcription of -石家 to contrast it with 一九: 반석 / 방석 pan’gyŏk / pangyŏk
The character modifier breve over o (ŏ) is used to represent -ере, -ере, -ере and over u (ú) is used to represent -ву, -ву.

III. Word Division: Each part of speech is to be separated from other parts of speech.

Specific Rules:

Nouns (명사), Pronouns (대명사), Imperfect Nouns (불완전 명사)
- Separate a noun, pronoun, or imperfect noun from other parts of speech.
  (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 18, Rule a)
  - 이것은 책이다  Igot ŭn ch'aek ida
  - 국장 겸 실장  Kukchang kyŏm silchang

Adjectives (형용사)
- Separate an adjective from other parts of speech. Separate a noun from a compound adjective without doing harm to the original meaning.
  (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 20, Rule a and b)
  - 착하게 사는 사람들  Ch'akhage san'ën saramdŭl
  - 목 마른 사슴  Mok marŭn sasŭm

Verbs (동사)
- Separate a verb from other parts of speech.
  (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 24, Rule a)
  - 아이의 가슴에 부모가 산다  Ai ŭi kasŭm enŭn pumo ka sanda
  - 성공의 찬스를 잡아라  Sŏnggong ŭi ch'ansŭ rŭl chabara

- Write an auxiliary verb separately from the main verb (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 25, Rule b)
  - 들어다 (main verb) + 가다 (auxiliary verb)
  - 들어갔다  Nŭlgŏ kada
  - 들어갔다  Nŭlgŏ katta

Adverbs (부사)
- Separate an adverb from other parts of speech. (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 28, Rule a)
  - 한글은 매우 독창적이고 과학적이다  Han'gŭl ŭn maeu tokch'angjŏg ik go kwačakchŏk ida
  - 젊은 사람들이 자주 찾아 주는 곳  Chŏlmun saramdŭl i chaju ch'a ja ch'unun kot

Particles (조사)
- Separate a particle from other parts of speech. (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 29, Rule a)
  - 나는 내 길에  Na nŭn nae kil e
  - 새 안 새 안 파랑새 야  Sae ya sae ya p'arangsae ya

Numerals (수사)
- Separate a native Korean and Sino-Korean number from its quantifier. (Refer to ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division: p. 30, Rule b)
  - 세 번째  Se pŏntchae
  - 스폰수섯 살의 방향  Sŭmul-tasŏt sal ŭi panggalwang

All page references refer to the ALA LC Romanization Tables: Korean Romanization and Word Division available online at http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/korean.pdf.