ROMANIZATION SYSTEM FOR KOREAN

FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

McCune-Reischauer System
(with minor modifications)
BGN/PCGN 1945 Agreement

This system for romanizing Korean was devised by G.M. McCune and E.O. Reischauer, and was originally published in the *Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* Volume XXIX, 1939. It has been used by the BGN since 1943, and was later adopted for use by the PCGN. Until 2011 it was used by BGN and PCGN for the romanization of Korean geographical names in Korea as a whole. In 2011 BGN and PCGN approved the use of the Republic of Korea's national system (created by the ROK's Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2000) for the romanization of Korean in the Republic of Korea only. As of 2011, therefore, this McCune-Reischauer system is used by BGN and PCGN only for the romanization of geographical names in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

A main characteristic of this system is the attempt to represent approximate Korean pronunciation, while systematically converting the *han'gŭl* characters to corresponding Roman-script letters. Since Korean pronunciation is often inconsistently represented in *han'gŭl*, the McCune-Reischauer conversion tables are rather elaborate, and reverse conversion (from Roman-script back to *han'gŭl*) presents varied difficulties.

Since the McCune-Reischauer system was first introduced, there have been a number of orthographical developments in Korean, giving rise to *han'gŭl* letter combinations not addressed by the original system. These additional graphic environments have been assessed, and are included as part of the system here.

The Korean language is written exclusively in *han'gŭl* characters in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The *han'gŭl* alphabet, which has 24 letters (14 consonants and 10 vowels) was devised in the fifteenth century, and is presented in syllabic units. An example follows:

Korean		Romanization
Left to right	Top to bottom	
평양	평 양	P'yŏngyang
Note: While Korean script may be written horizontally or vertically, romanization will always be written from left to right		

Romanization of simple consonant and vowel sounds

      The first table gives the romanizations for Korean consonants when they appear at the beginning or end of a word. The second gives the romanizations for Korean vowels. For both tables, the first given romanization is to be employed except in those graphic environments which are covered by subsequent tables. To determine the correct romanization for Korean consonants within a word, reference to the subsequent tables must be made.

Consonant characters		
Han'gŭl	**Romanization**	
	Beginning of word	End of word
ㄱ	k	k
ㄴ	n, *not romanized*	n
ㄷ	t, ch	t
ㄹ	n, *not romanized* , r^Note 4	l
ㅁ	m	m
ㅂ	p	p
ㅅ	s, sh	t
ㅇ	*not romanized*	ng
ㅈ	ch	t
ㅊ	ch'	t
ㅋ	k'	k
ㅌ	t'	t
ㅍ	p'	p
ㅎ	h	*not romanized*
ㄲ	kk	k
ㄸ	tt	t
ㅃ	pp	p
ㅆ	ss	t
ㅉ	tch	t
ㄺ		k
ㄼ		p

TABLE 1

Vowel characters	
Han'gŭl	**Romanization**
ㅏ	a
ㅑ	ya, a
ㅓ	ŏ
ㅕ	yŏ, ŏ
ㅗ	o
ㅛ	yo, o
ㅜ	u
ㅠ	yu, u
ㅡ	ŭ
ㅣ	i
ㅐ	ae
ㅒ	yae
ㅔ	e
ㅖ	ye, e
ㅚ	oe
ㅟ	wi, i
ㅢ	ŭi, i
ㅘ	wa
ㅝ	wŏ
ㅙ	wae
ㅞ	we

TABLE 2

Romanization of consonant clusters

This table, based on the McCune-Reischauer system with some additions, shows the romanizations that are to be employed for word-medial consonant clusters. For these word-medial clusters, characters ending syllables are listed in the left-hand column and characters starting succeeding syllables are listed in the top row. Where multiple romanizations options are given, the romanization is affected by the subsequent vowel; see Table 4.

SYLLABIC FINALS \ SYLLABIC INITIALS	ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅅ	ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅋ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ	ㄲ	ㄸ	ㅃ	ㅆ	ㅉ
ㄱ	kk / kch	ngn	kt / kch	ngn	ngm	kp	ks / ksh	g	kch	kch'	kk'	kt' / kch'	kp'	kh	kk	ktt	kpp	kss	ktch
ㄴ	n'g	nn	nd / nj	ll	nm	nb	ns / nsh	n	nj	nch'	nk'	nt' / nch'	np'	nh	nkk	ntt	npp	nss	ntch
ㄷ	kk	nn	tt	nn	nm	pp	ss	d	tch	tch'	tk'	tt'	tp'	th	tkk	tt	tpp	tss	tch
ㄹ	lg	ll	lt / lch	ll	lm	lb	ls / lsh	r	lch	lch'	lk'	lt' / lch'	lp'	rh	lkk	ltt	lpp	lss	ltch
ㅁ	mg	mn	md / mj	mn	mm	mb	ms / msh	m	mj	mch'	mk'	mt' / mch'	mp'	mh	mkk	mtt	mpp	mss	mtch
ㅂ	pk	mn	pt / pch	mn	mm	pp	ps / psh	b	pch	pch'	pk'	pt' / pch'	pp'	ph	pkk	ptt	pp	pss	ptch
ㅅ	kk	nn	tt / tch	nn	nm	pp	ss / ssh	d	tch	tch'	tk'	tt' / tch'	tp'	th	tkk	tt	tpp	ss	tch
ㅇ	ngg	ngn	ngd / ngj	ngn	ngm	ngb	ngs / ngsh	ng	ngj	ngch'	ngk'	ngt' / ngch'	mgp'	ng	ngkk	ngtt	ngpp	ngss	ngtch
vowel	g	n	d / j	r	m	b	s / ssh		j	ch'	k'	t' / ch'	p'	h	kk	tt	pp	ss	tch
ㅈ	kk	nn	tt	nn	nm	pp	ss	d	tch	tch'	tk'	tt'	tp'	th	tkk	tt	tpp	ss	tch
ㅊ	kk	nn	tt	nn	nm	pp	ss	d	tch	tch'	tk'	tt'	tp'	th	tkk	tt	tpp	ss	tch
ㅋ	kk	ngn	kt	ngn	ngm	kp	ks	k	kch	kcch'	kk'	kt'	kp'	kh	kk	ktt	kpp	kss	ktch
ㅌ	kk	nn	tt	nn	nm	pp	ss	d	tch	tch'	tk'	tt'	tp'	th	tk	tkk	tt	tpp	ss	tch
ㄺ	lg / kch	ngn	kt	ngl	ngm	kp	ks / ksh	lg	kch	kch'	lk'	kt' / kch'	kp'	lkh	lkk	kt	kpp	kss	ktch
ㄻ	mg / mj	mn	md	ml	lm	mb	ms / msh	lm	mj	mch'	mk'	mt' / mch'	mp'	mh	mkk	mtt	mpp	mss	mtch
ㄼ	pk	mn	pt / pch	ml	mm	lb	ps / psh	lb	pch	pch'	pk'	pt' / pch'	lp'	lph	pkk	ptt	lpp	pss	ptch
ㄵ	nk	nn	nt	nl	nm	nb	ns	nj	nj	nch'	nk'	nt'	np'	nh	nkk	ntt	npp	nss	ntch
ㄶ	nk	nn	nt	nl	nm	nb	ns	nh	nj	nch'	nk'	nt'	np'	nh	nkk	ntt	npp	nss	ntch
ㅄ	pk	pn	pt	pl	pm	pp	ps	ps / psh	pj	pch'	pk'	pt'	pp'	ph	pkk	ptt	pp	pss	ptch
ㄲ	kk / kch	ngn	kt / kch	ngn	ngm	kp	ks / ksh	g	kch	kch'	kk'	kt' / kch'	kp'	kh	kk	ktt	kpp	kss	ktch
ㅆ	kk	nn	tt	nn	nm	pp	ss	s	tch	tch'	tk'	tt'	tp'	th	tkk	tt	tpp	tss	tch
ㅍ	pk	mn	pt / pch	mn	mm	pp	ps / psh	p	pch	pch'	pk'	pt' / pch'	pp'	ph	pkk	ptt	pp	pss	ptch
ㅎ	k'	n	t' / ch'	r	m	p'	s	h	ch'	ch'	k'	t' / ch'	p'	h	kk	tt	pp	ss	tch
ㅀ	lk'	ll	lt' / lch'	ll	lm	lp'	ls / lsh	rh	lch'	lch'	lk'	lt' / lch'	lp'	rh	lkk	ltt	lpp	lss	ltch

TABLE 3

Complex consonant plus vowel romanizations

Each romanization shown in the following table represents the combination of a Korean consonant character (shown in the left-hand column) plus a Korean vowel character shown in the top row. This table shows irregular consonant+vowel romanizations.

Where more than one option is given, the first romanization preceding a dotted line is to be used at the beginning of word-initial syllables; a romanization following a dotted line is to be used at the beginning of non-word-initial syllables.

Some of the non-initial syllables give various romanization options. The appropriate romanization for these syllables is affected by the preceding syllable's consonant-final. For these syllables, this table should be used in conjunction with the consonant table (Table 3), first making reference to that table.

PRECEDING CONSONANT CHARACTER (rows) × **FOLLOWING VOWEL CHARACTERS** (columns)

(Within a cell, the value before "┊" is used word-initially; values after "┊" are used non-word-initially.)

	ㅑ	ㅕ	ㅛ	ㅠ	ㅣ	ㅖ	ㅟ	ㅢ	ㅟ	ㅞ
ㄱ								ki ┊ ki / gi		
ㄴ	ya ┊ ya / ya	yŏ ┊ nyŏ / lyŏ	yo ┊ nyo / lyo	yu ┊ nyu / lyu	i ┊ ni / li	ye ┊ ye / ye		ni ┊ ni / li		
ㄷ	cha ┊ cha / ja	chŏ ┊ chŏ / jŏ	cho ┊ cho / jo	chu ┊ chu / ju	chi ┊ chi / ji	che ┊ che / je		ti ┊ ti / di		
ㄹ	ya ┊ ya / ya / ya	yŏ ┊ ryŏ / nyŏ / lyŏ	yo ┊ ryo / nyo / lyo	yu ┊ ryu / nyu / lyu	i ┊ ri / ni / li	ye ┊ ye / ye / ye		ni ┊ ri / ni / li		
ㅁ							mi	mi		
ㅂ							pi ┊ pi / bi	pi ┊ pi / bi		
ㅅ	sa	sŏ	so	su	si	se	shwi	si	shwi	
ㅈ	cha ┊ cha / ja	chŏ ┊ chŏ / jŏ	cho ┊ cho / jo	chu ┊ chu / ju		che ┊ che / je		chi ┊ chi / ji		
ㅊ	ch'a	ch'ŏ	ch'o	ch'u		ch'e		ch'i	ch'wi	ch'we
ㅋ								k'i		
ㅌ	ch'a	ch'ŏ	ch'o	ch'u	ch'i	ch'e		t'i		
ㅍ							p'i	p'i		

TABLE 4

Notes

1. At the end of a syllable, the character ㅇ should be romanized *ng*, as in the following example:
   평양 → P'yŏngyang

   At the beginning of a syllable, the character ㅇ is silent and should not be romanized. An example follows:
   용화 → Yonghwa

2. Syllable boundaries within words are not reflected in romanization. In the different types of syllables shown in the table below, C represents any consonant character, V represents any vowel character and / represents a syllable boundary.

Han'gŭl	개성	남포	안양
Syllable boundaries	CV/CVC	CVC/CV	VC/VC
Romanization	Kaesŏng	Namp'o	Anyang

3. Euphonic changes occurring within a word, including between the specific and generic of a geographical name, should be reflected in romanization. Generic terms are usually seen separated from the name by a hyphen and with a lower case initial letter rather than as a separate word:
   영진리 → Yŏngjil-li
   덕흥리 → Tŏkhŭng-ni
   압록강 → Amnok-kang
   대동강 → Taedong-gang

4. As a result of 조선말규범집 ('Standard Korean Language' guidelines published in North Korea in 1966), unlike the Korean spoken in the Republic of Korea, the language spoken in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea maintains and pronounces the word-initial ㄹ ('r'). The use of the word-initial ㄹ ('r') can be seen in official news reports as well as native mapping. Since such examples exist, the word initial ㄹ ('r') is reflected as an option in the tables given above.
   (See further details in articles at http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/_____ and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North-South_differences_in_the_Korean_language).