

Surprise Your Korean Friends with Advanced Honorifics (Part 1)



Hello everyone! 안녕하세요 여러분! Today we are going to learn Korean honorifics, 높임말 or 존댓말. Korean language has a system of honorifics that reflects the social status of speakers. This system is extremely complicated, even Korean people often make mistakes. We are going to learn some basics today, so don't worry too much! I bet your Korean friends will be surprised if you use Korean honorifics fluently. Are you ready? Let's start!

Pronouns: 나 → 저, 우리 → 저희

The number 1 rule of Korean honorifics is “always make/put yourself lower”. You have to use the humble form 저 instead of 나, and 저희 instead of 우리. These are the most common honorific pronouns. You have to use these words when you talk to someone older than you, or to show respect to the listener.

나 I/me → 저
우리 us → 저희

나는 김수현이라고 해. I am Suhyun. (I am called Suhyun.)
→ 저는 김수현이라고 합니다.

우리 회사는 3층에 있어. Our company is located on the third floor.
→ 저희 회사는 3층에 있습니다.

Forms of address: 님, 씨

님 and 씨 are titles you can use when you need to address someone. 님 is the highest form of honorifics. It can be roughly translated as Mister or Madam in English. This suffix is used with people’s names and titles. Like 룩시 님, 가람 님. Also 님 can be added to job titles. What is a teacher in Korean? Yes, it’s 선생님. You may also heard 선배님, someone who is older than you in school or work, 사장님, president of a company, and 기사님, the driver.

On the other hand, 씨 is used to address people that are on the same level of the social status. They may be slightly older or younger than you, but you’re at the same social level. For example your colleague or your classmate. 씨 is attached after the full name, such as 김수현 씨, or simply after the first name 수현 씨.

오늘 누가 결석했지? Who is absent today?
선생님, 수현 씨가 결석했어요. Sir/Ma’am, 수현 is absent today.

안녕하세요, 어디로 갈까요? Welcome, where can I take you?
기사님, 홍대에 가고 싶어요. Sir/Ma’am, please take me to Hongdae.

Particles: 이/가 → 께서, 에게/한테 → 께

Korean language can index deference or respect toward someone by using honorific particles. We learned the subject markers 이/가 before, simply change 이/가 to 께서. For example, if you want to refer to what your teacher does, you have to say 선생님께서, not 선생님이. 에게/한테 are the dative particles, mainly used for someone to whom you are giving something. 에게 is the formal form and 한테 is the informal form. And 께 is the honorific form.

이/가 → 께서
에게/한테 → 께

선생님께서 출석을 불러요. The teacher calls the roll.

부모님께 전화했어요. I gave a phone call to my parents.

Verbs/Adjectives: -시-, -으시-

To show your respect to the person you are speaking to, you have to add -시- or -으시- to verbs and adjectives. You can add -시- to word stems ending in a vowel and -으시- to stems ending in a consonant. For example 가다, which means to go, changes to 가시다 and 걷다, which means to walk, changes to 걸으시다. Some verbs change totally from their original form, let's talk about them later. Please look at the following verbs and adjectives first.

가다 to go → 가시다

걷다 to walk → 걸으시다

보다 to see → 보시다

작다 small → 작으시다

주다 to give → 주시다

크다 big → 크시다

하다 to do → 하시다

수현 씨, 어디 가세요? Where are you going Suhyun?

지난 주말에 무슨 영화 보셨어요? Which film did you watch last weekend?

Irregular Verbs

The following is a list of the commonly used honorific verbs when you're talking to someone or talking about someone who is higher in the social hierarchy than you are. You use the following verbs to state the actions of that person.

있다 to be → 계시다

마시다 to drink → 드시다

먹다 to eat → 드시다 / 잡수시다

자다 to sleep → 주무시다

죽다 to die → 돌아가시다

똑똑. 아무도 안 계세요? (knocking on the door) Is there anybody there?

커피랑 홍차 중에 뭐 드실래요? What would you like to drink? Coffee or tea?

안녕히 주무세요. Sleep well.



The following verbs have humble forms, these verbs are used when you are referring to yourself in polite situations.

만나다 to meet → 뵙다

묻다 to ask → 여쭙다

주다 to give → 드리다 / 올리다

모르는 것이 있는데 여쭙봐도 될까요? May I ask you this?

선생님께 선물을 드리고 싶어요. I would like to give a present to my teacher.

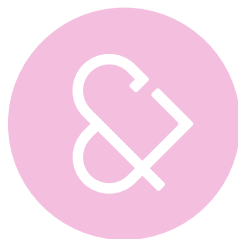


Practice

Please fill the blanks with a proper word.

1. 어제 선생님 _____ 메일 보냈는데 아직 답변이 없어.
2. 이 빵집은 빵이 정말 맛있어요! 꼭 _____!
3. _____ 엄마가 간호사예요.
4. 내일 4시에 선생님을 _____.
5. 선생님, 오늘 안에 전화 _____!
6. 성민아, 네 친구 제렌 _____ 잘 지내?
7. 조용히 해! 옆 방에 우리 아빠 _____.
8. _____는 22살이에요!
9. 대표 _____ 오늘 바쁘세요?
10. 어제 장례식에 갔어. 민수 할머니가 _____.

께 님 드리다 드시다 돌아가시다
뵙다 씨 주무시다 저 저희



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