



Korean Ladder Study Note

호칭이 애매하면 저기요

A Safe Opener Before Any Title

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Honorifics Titles & Address	호칭이 애매하면 저기요 A Safe Opener Before Any Title

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-ADR-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrfUzfdyrxo>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Here's my problem. In English I just say, "Excuse me." But in Korean, do I have to choose 아저씨, 아줌마, 아가씨, or 선생님 before I ask something? That feels dangerous.

맞아요. 호칭은 조심해야 해요. In Korean, titles can feel personal, so if you are not sure, 저기요 is a safe opener.

오늘의 핵심은 이것입니다. 호칭이 애매하면 먼저 저기요, 그리고 바로 정중한 부탁을 붙이세요.

So 저기요 is not their title. It's like a polite attention-getter before the real request.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	저기요, 물 좀 주세요. —	Excuse me, please give me some water.
Junho	네, 잠시만요. —	Yes, just a moment.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	감사합니다. —	Thank you.
Junho	네. —	Sure.
Hana	저기요, 물 좀 주세요. —	Excuse me, please give me some water.
Junho	네, 잠시만요. —	Yes, just a moment.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
저기요 jeogiyo	Excuse me / excuse me there	맞아요. 호칭은 조심해야 해요. In Korean, titles can feel personal, so if you are not sure, 저기요 is a safe opener.
저기요 + 정중한 부탁 jeogiyo + polite request	Excuse me + a clear polite request	오늘의 핵심은 이것입니다. 호칭이 애매하면 먼저 저기요, 그리고 바로 정중한 부탁을 붙이세요.
저기요 ≠ 호칭 jeogiyo ≠ ho-ching	저기요 is not a title	So 저기요 is not their title. It's like a polite attention-getter before the real request.
좀 jom	a little / a softener in requests	맞아요. 좀 can soften a request. 이것 주세요 is okay, but 이것 좀 주세요 often sounds a little smoother in service situations.
저기요는 시작할 때 jeogiyo-neun sijakhal ttae	저기요 is for starting	Also, 저기요 is for getting attention. If you are already talking with the person, you usually do not keep saying 저기요 before every sentence.
친구에게는 보통 이름 chingu-ege-neun botong ireum	With friends, usually use a name	Another boundary: 저기요 is not usually how you call a close friend. For a friend, you use their name or just start naturally.
알면 호칭, 모르면 저기요 almyeon ho-ching, moreumyeon jeogiyo	If you know the title, use it; if not, 저기요	And in a very formal office or school setting, a title like 선생님 or 사장님 may be better if you know it. But when you do not know, 저기요 is safe.



Grammar / Structure Notes

저기요

저기요 — Excuse me / excuse me there

Use it to get a stranger's attention politely

저기요 + 정중한 부탁

저기요 + 정중한 부탁 — Excuse me + a clear polite request

Safe opener first, request right after

저기요 ≠ 호칭

저기요 ≠ 호칭 — 저기요 is not a title

It opens the conversation

저기요, 물 좀 주세요.

저기요 + , + 물 + 좀 + 주세요 + . — Excuse me, please give me some water.

네. 저기요는 “excuse me”에 가까워요. Someone nearby, not your friend, not already in conversation with you.

저기요, 물 좀 주세요.

저기요 + , + 물 + 좀 + 주세요 + . — Excuse me, please give me some water.

저기요, 물 좀 주세요. This is natural because 저기요 gets attention, and 주세요 makes the request polite.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
저기요, 화장실이 어디예요?	jeogiyo, hwajangsiri eodiyeyo?
저기요	jeogiyo
저기요, 이것 좀 주세요.	jeogiyo, igeot jom juseyo.
저기요, 이거 좀 주세요.	jeogiyo, igeo jom juseyo.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 호칭이 애매하면 저기요 three times: slow, natural, then inside a short sentence.
- 2 Write one original sentence that was not in the video.
- 3 Rewatch the YouTube lesson and pause when the same pattern appears.

Related / Subsequent Studies



Lesson	Why study it next	Link
선생님 / 언니 / 아저씨 Addressing People You See Every Day	A1 Honorifics: compare 선생님 / 언니 / 아저씨 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-ADR-001
아줌마 / 아가씨 / 총각 Calling Strangers by Age and Gender	A1 Honorifics: compare 아줌마 / 아가씨 / 총각 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-ADR-002
귀하 / 귀사 / 본인 Formal Written Address in Letters	C1 Honorifics: compare 귀하 / 귀사 / 본인 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-ADR-003
그쪽 / 본인 / 당신 The 'You' Words That Can Backfire	B1 Honorifics: compare 그쪽 / 본인 / 당신 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-ADR-002

My Notes

Your ladder to fluent Korean. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.