



Korean Ladder Study Note



Polite and Casual Korean

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Honorifics Speech Levels	요 Polite and Casual Korean

Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-001>

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Rrfe-2s2vI)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Rrfe-2s2vI>

[Visit Korean Ladder for all free lessons](https://www.koreanladder.com)

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Core Idea

Okay, real question — in Korean, how do I not sound rude by accident?

Same — I learned '밥 먹어' from a drama, said it to my friend's mom, and the room went quiet.

아, 그 마음 알아요. The fix is one tiny syllable — 요. 오늘은 이걸 배워요.

두 가지 말투가 있어요. 존댓말 — polite speech — and 반말 — casual speech.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	이거 드세요. —	Have some of this. (polite)
Junho	아, 고마워요. —	Oh, thank you. (polite)
Junho	이거 먹어. —	Have some. (casual)



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	오, 고마워. —	Oh, thanks. (casual)

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
요 yo	the little politeness ending	아, 그 마음 알아요. The fix is one tiny syllable — 요. 오늘은 이걸 배워요.
존댓말 vs 반말 jondaenmal vs banmal	polite speech vs casual speech	두 가지 말투가 있어요. 존댓말 — polite speech — and 반말 — casual speech.
저는 학생이에요 / 나는 학생이야 jeoneun haksaeng-ieyo / naneun haksaeng-iya	polite / casual	Oh — 저 became 나, and 이에요 became 이야. The casual one drops that 요 feeling.
요 = 존중 + 거리 yo = jonjung + geori	요 = respect + polite distance	맞아요. 요 isn't about grammar stress — it's about respect and warmth. 처음 만난 사람한테는 요-style을 써요.
우리 말 놓자 uri mal notja	let's speak casually (a friend's invitation)	그리고 반말은 천천히. Save 반말 until a friend invites it — '우리 말 놓자.'
‘나’ → ‘저’ na → jeo	the word for 'I' gets polite too	정확해요. 작은 단어 하나가 크게 바뀌어요 — even the word for 'I' changes.
저(공손) / 나(반말) jeo / na	저 = humble 'I' (polite) · 나 = casual 'I'	친구한테는 '나', 윗사람한테는 '저'. With friends, 나; with elders, the humble 저.
요가 있으면 해요체 yo-ga isseumyeon haeyoche	if there's a 요, it's polite 해요-style	규칙은 간단해요. '요가 있으면 해요체'예요 — if it ends in 요, it's polite 해요-style.



Grammar / Structure Notes

요

요 — the little politeness ending

Add it, and you sound respectful.

존댓말 vs 반말

존댓말 vs 반말 — polite speech vs casual speech

Today: the everyday polite 요-style, 해요체.

존댓말 vs 반말

존댓말 vs 반말 — polite speech vs casual speech

Today: the everyday polite 요-style, 해요체.

존댓말 vs 반말

존댓말 vs 반말 — polite speech vs casual speech

Today: the everyday polite 요-style, 해요체.

저는 학생이에요.

저 + 는 + 학생 + 이에요 + . — I'm a student. (polite)

Listen — 저는 학생이에요. 'I'm a student.' That 이에요 ending? That's the 요-style.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
고마워요	go-ma-wo-yo
고마워	go-ma-wo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 요 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
감사합니다 / 죄송합니다 Formal Thanks and Apologies	A1 Honorifics: compare 감사합니다 / 죄송합니다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-002
하계체 The Familiar Speech Level Elders Use	C1 Honorifics: compare 하계체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-LVL-001
하십시오체 The Formal Speech Level for Announcements	B1 Honorifics: compare 하십시오체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-LVL-001
해라체 The Plain Style for Writing and News	B2 Honorifics: compare 해라체 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-LVL-001

My Notes

Free Korean lessons, one rung at a time. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.