



Korean Ladder Study Note

처음엔 전부 존댓말로

Why Beginners Should Default to Polite Speech

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Honorifics Speech Levels	처음엔 전부 존댓말로 Why Beginners Should Default to Polite Speech

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-004>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSbAGZasAD8>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Here's my real problem. I learn a short cute sentence from a drama, then I say it to a stranger, and suddenly it sounds rude.

맞아요. Korean is not only what you say. It is also how politely you say it.

English has tone and word choice. Korean has those too, and it also has speech levels built into sentence endings.

So the beginner rule is not just learn words. It's choose the safe ending first.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	안녕하세요. 처음 뵙겠습니다. —	Hello. Nice to meet you.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	안녕하세요. 저는 준호예요. —	Hello. I'm Junho.
Hana	저는 하나예요. 커피 좋아하세요? —	I'm Hana. Do you like coffee?
Junho	네, 좋아해요. 감사합니다. —	Yes, I like it. Thank you.
Hana	안녕하세요. —	Hello. Polite.
Junho	커피 좋아하세요? —	Do you like coffee? Polite.
Hana	네, 좋아해요. —	Yes, I like it. Polite.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
해요체 haeyo-che	everyday polite speech style	오늘의 패턴은 해요체예요. 해요체 is the everyday polite style, like 가요, 먹어요, 좋아요.
존댓말 → 해요체부터 jondaenmal → haeyo-che-buteo	Polite speech → start with 해요체	존댓말 is the bigger polite category. 해요체 is the beginner's best default inside 존댓말.
처음엔 해요체 cheoeum-en haeyo-che	At first, use 해요체	So 존댓말 is the polite umbrella, and 해요체 is the everyday polite form I should reach for first.
안녕하세요 annyeonghaseyo	Hello, polite greeting.	예를 들어요. 처음 만났을 때는 안녕하세요가 좋아요. In English, it means hello, politely.
안녕 annyeong	Hi or bye, casual.	반말로는 안녕이라고 할 수 있어요. But with a stranger, 안녕 can sound too casual, or childish.
안녕은항상안전하지않 아요 annyeong-eun hangsang anjeonhaji anayo	안녕 is not always safe.	Ah, 안녕 is not wrong Korean. It's wrong distance if I don't know the person.
처음에는안녕하세요 cheoeum-eneun annyeonghaseyo	At first, say 안녕하세요.	맞아요. 처음에는 안녕하세요. This is safe and natural.
저는학생이에요 jeo-neun haksaeng-ieyo	I am a student.	Another example. 저는 학생이에요. This is polite and simple: I am a student.



Grammar / Structure Notes

해요체

해요체 — everyday polite speech style

Use it first with strangers, staff, teachers, older people, and new acquaintances.

존댓말 → 해요체부터

존댓말 → 해요체부터 — Polite speech → start with 해요체

Polite, friendly, and very common.

처음엔 해요체

처음엔 해요체 — At first, use 해요체

Make it your automatic setting.

안녕하세요

안녕 + 하세요 — Hello, polite greeting.

예를 들어요. 처음 만났을 때는 안녕하세요가 좋아요. In English, it means hello, politely.

안녕

안녕 — Hi or bye, casual.

반말로는 안녕이라고 할 수 있어요. But with a stranger, 안녕 can sound too casual, or childish.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
안녕하세요	annyeonghaseyo
저는 학생이에요	jeo-neun haksaeng-ieyo
학생이에요	haksaeng-ieyo
커피 좋아하세요?	keopi joahaseyo?

Self-Check

- 1 Say 처음엔 전부 존댓말로 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
네 Adding 요 to Single Words and Fragments to Sound Polite	A1 Honorifics: compare 네 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-003
요 Polite and Casual Korean	A1 Honorifics: compare 요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-001
반존대 When Koreans Mix 요 and 반말 in One Breath	B1 Honorifics: compare 반존대 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-LVL-002

My Notes

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