



Korean Ladder Study Note

괜찮습니다만 / 괜찮은데요

Soft Polite Refusals for Beginners

Level	Topic	Focus
A1 · Beginner TOPIK 1	Honorifics Speech Levels	괜찮습니다만 / 괜찮은데요 Soft Polite Refusals for Beginners

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-012>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1ge68g2U5Y>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

When someone offers me coffee, can I always say 괜찮은데요 to mean, “No, thank you”?

항상 그렇지는 않아요. 일상에서 가장 무난한 사양은 “아니요, 괜찮아요”예요. It is the safest everyday way to say, “No, thank you.”

격식 있는 상황에서는 “아니요, 괜찮습니다”가 가장 무난해요. This is the formal counterpart.

오늘 살펴볼 표현은 “괜찮습니다만…”과 “괜찮은데요”예요. 둘 다 상황에 따라 사양할 때 쓸 수 있지만, 말투와 뉘앙스가 달라요. Both can help with a careful refusal, but neither is a universal replacement for “No, thank you.”

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	커피 더 드릴까요? —	Would you like some more coffee?
Junho	아, 아니요. 괜찮아요. —	Oh, no thank you. I'm fine.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	도와드릴까요? —	May I help you?
Hana	아니요, 괜찮습니다. —	No, thank you. I'm fine.
Hana	방은 어떠세요? —	How is the room?
Junho	생각보다 괜찮은데요. —	It's better than I expected.
Hana	커피 드릴까요? —	Would you like some coffee?
Junho	커피는 괜찮습니다만, 물을 조금 부탁드립니다. —	I don't need coffee, but I would like a little water, please.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
괜찮습니다만... / 괜찮은데요 gwaenchanseumnid aman... / gwaenchaneundeyo	Formal open contrast / everyday background or contrast	오늘 살퍼볼 표현은 “괜찮습니다만...”과 “괜찮은데요”예요. 둘 다 상황에 따라 사양할 때 쓸 수 있지만, 말투와 뉘앙스가 달라요. Both can help with a careful refusal, but neither is a universal replacement for “No, thank you.”
괜찮아요 + 제안의 맥락 → 사양 gwaenchanayo + jeani maengnak → sayang	“I’m okay” plus the context of an offer → polite refusal	맞아요. “괜찮아요” 자체는 “I’m okay” or “It’s okay”예요. An offer or suggestion can turn it into a polite refusal.
괜찮습니다만... gwaenchanseumnid aman...	I’m fine, but...	“괜찮-”은 형용사 어간이고, “습니다만”은 격식 있는 높임과 “하지만”의 대조를 나타내는 어미예요. In English, the ending adds formal politeness and a sense of “but.”
-습니다만: 격식 있는 대조 / -은데요: 배경·대조·반응 기다리기 —	Formal contrast / background, contrast, and room for a response	Then “but” is built into 괜찮습니다만, while 괜찮은데요 gives background or contrast and waits for a response.
제안·권유 → 사양 가능 —	Offer or suggestion → possible gentle refusal	핵심은 먼저 맥락을 보는 거예요. 제안이나 권유 뒤에서는 괜찮다는 대답이 사양으로 이해될 수 있어요. After an offer or suggestion, it may become a gentle refusal.



Word	Meaning	Example
괜찮습니다만... ≠ 괜찮은데요 —	Not merely formal versus everyday	두 표현은 격식뿐 아니라 어미의 기능도 달라요. “괜찮습니다만...”은 격식 있게 대조를 열고, “괜찮은데요”는 일상적인 말투로 배경이나 대조를 나타내며 상대의 반응을 기다려요.
괜찮은데요 ≠ 항상 사양 —	괜찮은데요 does not always signal refusal.	맞아요. 제안이 없으면 “괜찮은데요”는 단순히 평가나 대조를 나타낼 수 있어요. Do not translate the ending as “no thanks” by itself.
커피는 괜찮습니다만... keopineun gwaench anseumnidaman...	Soft Polite Refusals for Beginners	이번에는 격식 있는 표현을 들어 보세요. “커피는 괜찮습니다만...” The ending suggests that a contrast or continuation may follow.



Grammar / Structure Notes

아니요, 괜찮아요.

아니요, 괜찮아요. — No, thank you. I'm okay.

Safest neutral choice in everyday polite speech

아니요, 괜찮습니다.

아니요, 괜찮습니다. — No, thank you. I'm fine.

Neutral refusal in formal polite speech

괜찮습니다만... / 괜찮은데요

괜찮습니다만... / 괜찮은데요 — Formal open contrast / everyday background or contrast

Refusal meaning depends on context

같은 뜻, 다른 격식? 아니에요.

같은 뜻, 다른 격식? 아니에요. — Same meaning with different formality? Not quite.

The endings do different conversational jobs.

괜찮아요 + 제안의 맥락 → 사양

괜찮아요 + 제안의 맥락 → 사양 — “I'm okay” plus the context of an offer → polite refusal

The surrounding conversation creates the refusal meaning.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
아, 아니요. 괜찮아요.	a, aniyo. gwaenchanayo.
커피는 괜찮습니다만...	keopineun gwaenchanseumnidaman...
괜찮은데요.	gwaenchaneundeyo?

Self-Check

- 1 Say 괜찮습니다만 / 괜찮은데요 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 / 예 / 알겠습니다 Three Polite Acknowledgments	A1 Honorifics: compare 네 / 예 / 알겠습니다 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-LVL-008
네 Two Polite Ways to Say Yes	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-006
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

My Notes

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