



Korean Ladder Study Note

성함이 어떻게 되세요

Politely Asking Personal Questions

Level	Topic	Focus
A2 · Elementary TOPIK 2	Honorifics Subject Honorifics	성함이 어떻게 되세요 Politely Asking Personal Questions

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-SUB-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejeKazefU9A>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Quick question — how do you ask an older Korean their age? If you just say 몇 살이에요 to an elder, it can land a little too plain.

Wait, I've been saying 몇 살이에요 to everyone. Is that rude?

Not rude to friends. But with elders, Korean has a polite frame: -이/가 어떻게 되세요? Literally 'how does your ___ become?' — really it means 'may I ask your ___?'

The magic is 되세요. That's 되다 plus the honorific ending 세요. In English, 세요 shows respect toward the listener — it lifts the whole question up a level.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	안녕하세요. 성함이 어떻게 되세요? —	Hello. May I ask your name?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	저는 이하나요. 연세가 어떻게 되세요? —	I'm Lee Hana. May I ask your age?
Junho	마흔둘이에요. —	I'm forty-two.
Hana	가족이 어떻게 되세요? —	How big is your family?
Junho	아내하고 아들 하나예요. —	My wife and one son.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
되세요 doeseyo	honorific of 되다 (to become)	The magic is 되세요. That's 되다 plus the honorific ending 세요. In English, 세요 shows respect toward the listener — it lifts the whole question up a level.
성함 = 이름 seongham = ireum	'Name' — 성함 is the honorific of 이름 (높임말)	성함 is the honorific word for 이름. Same meaning — 'name' — but 성함 is 높임말, the respectful language you use for an elder.
이름 / 성함 ireum / seongham	plain / honorific 'name'	So to a grandmother I say 성함, but to a classmate I just say 이름?
연세 yeonse	age (honorific of 나이)	For age, elders get a special word too: 연세, the honorific of 나이.
어떻게 되세요 —	one frame, many questions	Every single question used 어떻게 되세요 — so smooth and respectful.
이름 / 나이 ireum / nai	plain 'name' / 'age'	Here's the classic slip English speakers make: using 이름 and 나이 with an elder.
성함 + 되세요 —	honorific noun + honorific verb	So I swap in the honorific word AND keep 되세요?
높임말 + 세요 —	double respect	Exactly. Honorific noun plus honorific verb — respect on both sides of the sentence.



Grammar / Structure Notes

-이/가 어떻게 되세요?

-이/가 어떻게 되세요? — May I ask your ___?

The polite way to ask personal questions.

되세요

되세요 — honorific of 되다 (to become)

세요 = respect toward the listener.

성함이 어떻게 되세요?

성함 + 이 + 어떻게 + 되세요 + ? — May I ask your name?

Watch the name question closely: 성함이 어떻게 되세요?

성함 = 이름

성함 + = + 이름 — 'Name' — 성함 is the honorific of 이름 (높임말)

성함 is the honorific word for 이름. Same meaning — 'name' — but 성함 is 높임말, the respectful language you use for an elder.

이름 / 성함

이름 / 성함 — plain / honorific 'name'

Friend → 이름. Elder → 성함.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
성하미 어떠케 되세요	seonghami eotteoke doeseyo?
저는 스물여덟비예요	jeoneun seumullyeodeolbieyo.

Self-Check

- 1 Say 성함이 어떻게 되세요 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
Korean Honorifics 세요 and 께서	A2 Honorifics: compare Korean Honorifics with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-SUB-001
식사하셨어요 Everyday Subject Honorific Phrases	A2 Honorifics: compare 식사하셨어요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-SUB-002
-(으)시- Adding the Honorific Infix to Any Verb	B1 Honorifics: compare -(으)시- with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-SUB-002
간접 높임 말씀 · 연세 · 댁에 높임 붙이기	C1 Honorifics: compare 간접 높임 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-SUB-002

My Notes

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