



Korean Ladder Study Note

손윗사람 / 손아랫사람 / 연장자

Talking About Who Outranks Whom

Level	Topic	Focus
B1 · Intermediate TOPIK 3	Honorifics Titles & Address	손윗사람 / 손아랫사람 / 연장자 Talking About Who Outranks Whom

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-ADR-005>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2CITbEQ00s>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real story. A coworker told me to greet the people above me first. Then my sister-in-law used a totally different word for the older people in her family. Are those the same idea?

좋은 질문이에요. Korean has different words for different kinds of above: age, family order, and job rank.

오늘은 네 단어를 배워요. 손윗사람, 손아랫사람, 연장자, 그리고 윗분. These words help you decide who gets honorifics before you even pick a verb ending.

먼저 손윗사람. 나보다 나이나 항렬이 위인 사람이에요. In English, it's someone senior to you: older, or higher in family order.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	오늘 회식에 윗분들도 오세요? —	Are the higher-ups coming to tonight's team dinner?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	네, 부장님께서 오신다고 하셨어요. —	Yes, the department head said he's coming.
Junho	그럼 자리는 연장자 순서대로 정할까요? —	Then shall we seat people by age?
Hana	좋아요. 그리고 막내들도 잘 챙겨 줘요. —	Sounds good. And look after the youngest ones too.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
손윗사람 · 손아랫사람 · 연장자 · 윗분 —	Words that describe seniority	오늘은 네 단어를 배워요. 손윗사람, 손아랫사람, 연장자, 그리고 윗분. These words help you decide who gets honorifics before you even pick a verb ending.
손윗사람 sonwitsaram	someone above you (age, family order)	먼저 손윗사람. 나보다 나이나 항렬이 위인 사람이에요. In English, it's someone senior to you: older, or higher in family order.
손아랫사람 sonaraetsaram	someone below you (younger, lower in family order)	반대는 손아랫사람이에요. It's the opposite: someone younger than you, or below you in family order.
항렬 hangnyeol	generation order in a family	맞아요. 항렬은 가족 안에서의 세대 순서예요. So a young uncle is still your 손윗사람, because he's a generation above you.
연장자 yeonjangja	the elder; an older person (age only)	다음은 연장자예요. 나이가 많은 사람이에요. In English, the elder, the older person. It's about age only.
윗분 witbun	the people above you (honorific)	그리고 윗분. 윗분은 윗사람을 높여서 이르는 말이에요. It's the respectful way to say the people above you, often your higher-ups at work.
손윗사람 ↔ 손아랫사람 —	Relationship words: above me, below me	손윗사람과 손아랫사람은 관계를 나타내는 말이에요. These two words describe a relationship. Someone is only above or below compared to you.
연장자 = 나이 · 손윗사람 = 나와 비교 —	Elder: age only. Above me: compared to me.	Okay, so for the elder word, I just check who's oldest in the room. For the above and below words, I always compare people to myself.



Grammar / Structure Notes

손윗사람 · 손아랫사람 · 연장자 · 윗분

손윗사람 · 손아랫사람 · 연장자 · 윗분 — Words that describe seniority

Figure out WHO is above you first, then choose the form

손윗사람

손윗사람 — someone above you (age, family order)

먼저 손윗사람. 나보다 나이나 항렬이 위인 사람이예요. In English, it's someone senior to you: older, or higher in family order.

손아랫사람

손아랫사람 — someone below you (younger, lower in family order)

반대는 손아랫사람이예요. It's the opposite: someone younger than you, or below you in family order.

손윗사람

손윗사람 — older, OR higher in family order

Wait, family order? So my uncle could be above me even if he's younger than me?

항렬

항렬 — generation order in a family

A younger uncle is still above you

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
윗분들께 먼저 인사드리세요.	witbundeul-kke meonjeo insadeuriseyo
[위분들께 먼저 인사드리세요]	witbundeul-kke meonjeo insadeuriseyo
윗분	witbun
[위분]	witbun
뿐	ppun
[소뉘사람]	sonwitsaram

Self-Check

- 1 Say 손윗사람 / 손아랫사람 / 연장자 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
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
사모님 / 댁 / 어르신 Respectfully Naming Someone's Spouse and Home	B1 Honorifics: compare 사모님 / 댁 / 어르신 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-ADR-003
이분 / 그분 / 저분 The Honorific Way to Say 'This/That Person'	B1 Honorifics: compare 이분 / 그분 / 저분 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-ADR-004
저기요 / 여기요 / 여보세요 Getting Someone's Attention Politely	B1 Honorifics: compare 저기요 / 여기요 / 여보세요 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-ADR-001

My Notes

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