



Korean Ladder Study Note

편찮으시다 / 돌아가시다

Honorific Verbs for Illness and Passing

Level	Topic	Focus
B1 · Intermediate TOPIK 3	Honorifics Subject Honorifics	편찮으시다 / 돌아가시다 Honorific Verbs for Illness and Passing

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-SUB-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2MSJUzKz_U

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

So here's my real problem. My host mother said her grandmother was sick, and I wanted to say '할머니가 아파요' — but everyone winced. Why?

I've done that too. It's not wrong grammar — it just sounds a little... flat, like you're talking about a friend, not an elder.

That instinct is right. 아프다 is fine for you and me. But for an elder, Korean has a softer, more respectful verb.

The word is 편찮으시다. In English, it means 'to be unwell' — it's the honorific of 아프다, used only for someone you respect.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	아버지께서 요즘 좀 어떠세요? —	How is your father these days?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	많이 편찮으세요. 병원에 다니고 계세요. —	He's quite unwell. He's going to the hospital.
Hana	저런... 빨리 나오시길 바라요. —	Oh no... I hope he recovers soon.
Junho	삼가 고인의 명복을 빕니다. —	My deepest condolences (formal).
Hana	얼마나 힘드세요. 마음이 아파요. —	How hard this must be. My heart aches.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
편찮으시다 pyeonchaneusida	to be unwell (honorific of 아프다)	The word is 편찮으시다. In English, it means 'to be unwell' — it's the honorific of 아프다, used only for someone you respect.
께서 kkeseo	honorific subject particle (replaces 이/가)	And notice the subject changes too. For elders we swap 이/가 for the honorific particle께서. So it becomes 할머니께서, not 할머니가.
편찮 + 으시 + 어요 → 편찮으세요 —	root + honorific 시 + polite ending	Hear the shape: 편찮- plus -으시- plus the polite ending -어요, blended into 편찮으세요. The -시- is the respect, built right in.
___께서 편찮으세요 —	[elder] is unwell	좋아요. Same pattern every time —께서 for the elder, 편찮으시다 for the illness.
아프세요 → 편찮으세요 —	swap the verb, don't just add 시	Okay, let me reason it out. So I never add -시- to 아프다 and say 아프세요 — I switch to the whole different verb, 편찮으시다?
편찮으세요 —	the warm, proper choice	네, exactly. 아프세요 isn't rude, but it feels light for a grandparent. 편찮으세요 is the warm, proper choice.
친구 → 아파요 —	peers keep the plain verb	And for a friend my age, I just say 아파요, right? I don't want to sound stiff calling a classmate 편찮으세요.
편찮으시다 = elders · 아프다 = peers —	match the verb to the person	정확해요. Save 편찮으시다 for elders and respected people. For a friend, 아파요 is perfect.



Grammar / Structure Notes

편찮으시다

편찮으시다 — to be unwell (honorific of 아프다)

Only for elders / respected people

께서

께서 — honorific subject particle (replaces 이/가)

할머니가 → 할머니께서

편찮으시다

편찮으시다 — respect you can hear

care, not just grammar

할머니께서 편찮으세요.

할머니 + 께서 + 편찮으세요 + . — Grandmother is unwell.

Let me show you a real sentence. 할머니께서 편찮으세요. In English, 'Grandmother is unwell.'

편찮 + 으시 + 어요 → 편찮으세요

편찮 + 으시 + 어요 → 편찮으세요 — root + honorific 시 + polite ending

The 시 carries the respect

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
편찮으세요	pyeonchaneuseyo
할머니께서 편찮으세요	halmeoni-kkeseo pyeonchaneuseyo
...편찮으세요	...pyeonchaneuseyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 편찮으시다 / 돌아가시다 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
-(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
계시다 / 드시다 / 주무시다 / 연세 / 진지 Special Honorific Words	B1 Honorifics: compare 계시다 / 드시다 / 주무시다 / 연세 / 진지 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B1-HON-SUB-001
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
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.