



Korean Ladder Study Note

부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님

Addressing Coworkers by Rank

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Honorifics Titles & Address	부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님 Addressing Coworkers by Rank

Study Links

[Open this lesson on Korean Ladder](https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-001)

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-001>

[Watch the full video on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loKI8u9w5HI)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loKI8u9w5HI>

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

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Core Idea

Okay, real talk — at a Korean company, can I just walk up to my boss and say his name, like 'Hey, Minsu'?

I used to think Korean names worked like ours — first name for friends, last name for bosses. Turns out it's a whole different ladder.

좋은 질문이에요. Great question. In a Korean office, you almost never call a senior by their name. You call them by their rank — their 직급.

Here's today's one core idea: take the rank word and add 님. 님 is the respect tag. 부장 plus 님 becomes 부장님.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	부장님, 잠깐 시간 괜찮으세요? —	Department Head, do you have a moment?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	네, 김 대리. 무슨 일이에요? —	Yes, Assistant Manager Kim. What's up?
Junho	부장님 → up: title + 님 —	junior addressing senior
Hana	김 대리 → down: name + rank —	senior addressing junior

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
직급 jik-geup	job rank / position	좋은 질문이에요. Great question. In a Korean office, you almost never call a senior by their name. You call them by their rank — their 직급.
직급 + 님 jik-geup + nim	rank + the respect tag '-nim'	Here's today's one core idea: take the rank word and add 님. 님 is the respect tag. 부장 plus 님 becomes 부장님.
님 nim	the honorific 'respect tag'	님 means roughly 'honored.' Without it, 부장 is just the job. With it, 부장님 is how you speak TO that person, or about them respectfully.
부장 vs 부장님 bujang vs bujang-nim	the job vs. addressing the person	Oh, so 님 is like adding a tiny 'sir' or 'ma'am' that snaps onto the job title itself. That's kind of elegant.
부장님 bu-jang-nim	(respected) department head	Let's meet the ladder. The top one today: 부장님. 부장 is a department head — a senior manager. So you say 부장님.
과장님 gwa-jang-nim	(respected) section chief / manager	One rung down: 과장님. 과장 is a section chief — a mid-level manager. Add 님, and it's 과장님.
대리님 dae-ri-nim	(respected) assistant manager	And just above entry level: 대리님. 대리 is an assistant manager. So, 대리님. Same recipe every time — rank, then 님.
부장님 · 과장님 · 대리님 bujang-nim · gwajang-nim · daeri-nim	head · chief · assistant manager — all + 님	So once I know the rung, I literally never have to guess — I just glue 님 on the end. 부장님, 과장님, 대리님.



Grammar / Structure Notes

직급

직급 — job rank / position

In the office, rank — not your name — is how people address you.

직급 + 님

직급 + 님 — rank + the respect tag '-nim'

님 attaches to a title to show respect: 부장 → 부장님.

님

님 — the honorific 'respect tag'

Bare title = neutral label. Title + 님 = how you address a senior.

부장 vs 부장님

부장 vs 부장님 — the job vs. addressing the person

님 turns a label into a respectful address.

부장님

부장 + 님 — (respected) department head

Let's meet the ladder. The top one today: 부장님. 부장 is a department head — a senior manager. So you say 부장님.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
부장님	bu-jang-nim
과장님	gwa-jang-nim

Self-Check

- 1 Say 부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님 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
님 / 씨 Korean Titles and Address	A2 Honorifics: compare 님 / 씨 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A2-HON-ADR-001
선생님 / 언니 / 아저씨 Addressing People You See Every Day	A1 Honorifics: compare 선생님 / 언니 / 아저씨 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-A1-HON-ADR-001
이모 / 사장님 / 기사님 Kinship & Job Titles for Strangers	C1 Honorifics: compare 이모 / 사장님 / 기사님 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-C1-HON-ADR-001
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

Free Korean lessons, one rung at a time. This PDF, the website, and the video lessons are free for personal study.