



Korean Ladder Study Note

선배님 / 후배

Addressing Seniors and Juniors

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Honorifics Titles & Address	선배님 / 후배 Addressing Seniors and Juniors

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-002>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqKLIP9tG4A>

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

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. My Korean friend calls her classmate 선배 — they're only one year apart. Why is she being so formal with a classmate?

좋은 질문이에요. 한국에서는 나이만큼이나 '순서'가 중요해요. 먼저 들어온 사람이 선배예요.

먼저 두 단어부터 짚어 볼게요. 선배와 후배. In English, 선배 is the senior, 후배 is the junior.

선배는 학교나 회사에 나보다 먼저 들어온 사람이에요. The one who came before you.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	민수 씨, 이분 아세요? —	Minsu, do you know this person?
Junho	네, 제 대학교 선배님이에요. —	Yes, she's my university senior.



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	그럼 선배님께 여쭙보세요. —	Then go ask your senior.
Junho	네, 여쭙볼게요. —	Okay, I'll ask her.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
선배 / 후배 seonbae / hubae	senior / junior	먼저 두 단어부터 짚어 볼게요. 선배와 후배. In English, 선배 is the senior, 후배 is the junior.
선배 seonbae	senior — entered before you	선배는 학교나 회사에 나보다 먼저 들어온 사람이에요. The one who came before you.
후배 hubae	junior — entered after you	후배는 반대예요. 나보다 나중에 들어온 사람. The one who came after you.
선배님 seonbaenim	(respected) senior	그리고 윗사람을 부를 때는 님을 붙여요. 선배 → 선배님. 님은 존중을 표시해요 — it marks respect.
후배 (님 ☒) hubae	junior — usually no -님	맞아요. 보통 후배한테는 님을 안 붙여요. 님은 나를 낮추고 상대를 높일 때 써요 — you raise them, not down.
이분은 제 선배예요 ibuneun je seonbae-yeyo	This person is my senior.	예문을 볼게요. 이분은 제 선배예요. This person is my senior.
이분 = this person (polite) —	이분 is the honorific of 이 사람.	So 이분 already sounds respectful for 'this person' — you're being polite about them before you even get to 선배.
저는 후배예요 jeoneun hubae-yeyo	I'm the junior.	완벽해요. 이제 저는 후배예요. I'm the junior. 자기를 말할 때는 낮춰서 말해요.



Grammar / Structure Notes

선배 / 후배

선배 / 후배 — senior / junior

By entry order — school year, join date — not only age.

선배

선배 — senior — entered before you

선배는 학교나 회사에 나보다 먼저 들어온 사람이에요. The one who came before you.

후배

후배 — junior — entered after you

후배는 반대예요. 나보다 나중에 들어온 사람. The one who came after you.

선배님

선배님 — (respected) senior

-님 attaches to seniors/titles to show respect.

후배 (님 ☒)

후배 (님 ☒) — junior — usually no -님

-님 lifts the other person; you don't lift a junior.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
선배님께 여쭙봤어요	seonbaenimkke yeojjwobwasseoyo
여쭙봤어요	yeojjwobwasseoyo
선배님, 안녕하세요	seonbaenim, annyeonghaseyo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 선배님 / 후배 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
부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님 Addressing Coworkers by Rank	B2 Honorifics: compare 부장님 / 과장님 / 대리님 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-001
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

My Notes

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