



Korean Ladder Study Note

손님 / 고객님 / 회원님

Service-Industry Address Terms

Level	Topic	Focus
B2 · Upper-Intermediate TOPIK 4	Honorifics Titles & Address	손님 / 고객님 / 회원님 Service-Industry Address Terms

Study Links

Open this lesson on Korean Ladder

<https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-003>

Watch the full video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iftgwCxP4w4>

Visit koreanladder.com for all free lessons

<https://www.koreanladder.com>

Core Idea

Okay, real question. I walked into a cafe in Seoul and the barista called me 손님. Was that... rude? Formal? What?

좋은 질문이에요. 전혀 무례하지 않아요. 손님 just means 'guest' or 'customer' — it's the friendly everyday word.

There are three you'll hear. The most formal is 고객님 — 'valued customer.' It sounds like [고갱님], because 고객 plus 님 nasalizes the ㅓ.

먼저 손님부터 볼게요. 가게, 카페, 식당 어디서든 들어요. Let's meet all three, one card at a time.

Conversation Snapshot

Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Hana	손님, 몇 분이세요? —	How many are you (customer)?



Speaker	Korean	Meaning
Junho	두 명이에요. —	Two people.
Hana	이쪽으로 오세요. 주문하시겠어요? —	This way, please. Would you like to order?
Junho	네, 아메리카노 두 잔이요. —	Yes, two Americanos.

Vocabulary & Useful Expressions

Word	Meaning	Example
고객님 go-gaeng-nim	'valued customer' — the formal one	There are three you'll hear. The most formal is 고객님 — 'valued customer.' It sounds like [고갱님], because 고객 plus 님 nasalizes the ㄱ.
손님 · 고객님 · 회원님 —	everyday · formal · member	먼저 손님부터 볼게요. 가게, 카페, 식당 어디서든 들어요. Let's meet all three, one card at a time.
손님 son-nim	customer / guest (everyday)	손님. 이게 기본이에요. A cafe, a restaurant, a small shop — the staff just say 손님.
회원님 hoe-won-nim	member (address form)	그리고 회원님. 회원 등록을 한 사람에게 써요 — for people who signed up as members.
장소에 따라 정해져요 jang-so-e tta-ra jeong-hae-jyeo-yo	It's decided by the place.	네, 바로 그거예요. 규칙은 간단해요 — 장소에 따라 정해져요. The setting chooses the word for you.
하시겠어요 ha-si-ge-sseo-yo	Service-Industry Address Terms	발음 주의하세요. 겠어요 is not 'get-seo-yo.' The ㅅ slides into the vowel, so it's [게써요] — smooth, no hard stop.
게써요 ge-sseo-yo	Service-Industry Address Terms	좋아요. 겠어요 was perfect — you kept it soft, [게써요], not 'get.' That already sounds like real staff.
손님 (O) / 당신 (X) —	Use 손님 — never 당신 to a customer	아니요. 당신을 손님에게 쓰면 차가워요, 심지어 싸우는 느낌이에요. Don't translate 'you' as 당신 here — 손님 is the safe address word.



Grammar / Structure Notes

고객님

고객님 — 'valued customer' — the formal one

님 is an honorific suffix, not a particle. 고객 + 님 → [고객님].

손님 · 고객님의 · 회원님

손님 · 고객님의 · 회원님 — everyday · formal · member

Same idea — different setting.

손님

손님 — customer / guest (everyday)

손님. 이게 기본이에요. A cafe, a restaurant, a small shop — the staff just say 손님.

고객님

고객님 — (valued) customer — formal

고객님 is the dressed-up version. 큰 회사, 전화 상담에서 써요. Same 님, but remember the sound: [고객님].

회원님

회원님 — member (address form)

회원 등록(deung-nok) 후에 써요 — used once you've registered as a member.

Pronunciation Loop

Phrase	How to practice
하시게써요	ha-si-ge-sseo-yo
손님, 주문하시게써요?	son-nim, ju-mun-ha-si-ge-sseo-yo
손님, 주문하시겠어요?	son-nim, ju-mun-ha-si-ge-sseo-yo
게써요	ge-sseo-yo

Self-Check

- 1 Say 손님 / 고객님의 / 회원님 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
선배님 / 후배 Addressing Seniors and Juniors	B2 Honorifics: compare 선배님 / 후배 with this lesson so the boundary becomes clearer.	Open lesson https://www.koreanladder.com/lesson.html?id=KOR-B2-HON-ADR-002
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

My Notes

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