

한국어

KOREAN FOR SOCIAL LIFE

Making Friends

친구 만들기

How to introduce yourself, open lightly, keep a conversation breathing, and walk away with a **KakaoTalk** — the move that turns a nice chat into an actual friendship.

LESSON 1 OF 6

01 Introducing Yourself 자기소개

A foreigner who opens in polite Korean is instantly charming — you don't need to be fluent, you need to **try**. Lead with a smile, your name, and where you're from. Koreans warm up fast to effort.

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
안녕하세요, 처음 뵙겠습니다	<i>annyeonghaseyo, cheoem boepgesseumnida</i>	Hello, nice to meet you	polished first line
<p>안녕하세요 <i>annyeonghaseyo</i> hello 처음 <i>cheoem</i> for the first time 뵙겠습니다 <i>boepgesseumnida</i> (I) meet (you) (humble)</p>			
저는 __ 라고 해요	<i>jeoneun __ rago haeyo</i>	I'm called __	give your name
<p>저 <i>jeo</i> I (humble) 는 <i>neun</i> (topic) __ __ (name) 라고 <i>rago</i> called 해요 <i>haeyo</i> (I) am/say</p>			
미국에서 왔어요	<i>migugeseo wasseoyo</i>	I'm from the US	swap 미국 for your country
<p>미국 <i>miguk</i> USA 에서 <i>eseo</i> from 왔어요 <i>wasseoyo</i> (I) came</p>			
한국어 배우고 있어요	<i>hangugeo baeugo isseoyo</i>	I'm learning Korean	people love hearing this
<p>한국어 <i>hangugeo</i> Korean (language) 배우고 <i>baeugo</i> learning 있어요 <i>isseoyo</i> (I) am (doing)</p>			
만나서 반가워요	<i>mannaseo bangawoyo</i>	Nice to meet you	warmer, everyday version
<p>만나서 <i>mannaseo</i> having met 반가워요 <i>bangawoyo</i> (I'm) glad</p>			
이름이 어떻게 되세요?	<i>ireumi eotteoke doeseyo?</i>	What's your name? (polite)	very respectful phrasing
<p>이름 <i>ireum</i> name 이 <i>i</i> (subject) 어떻게 <i>eotteoke</i> how 되세요 <i>doeseyo</i> becomes/is? (polite)</p>			
나이가 어떻게 되세요?	<i>naiga eotteoke doeseyo?</i>	How old are you? (polite)	normal early question here
<p>나이 <i>nai</i> age 가 <i>ga</i> (subject) 어떻게 <i>eotteoke</i> how 되세요 <i>doeseyo</i> becomes/is? (polite)</p>			

CULTURAL NOTE — THE AGE QUESTION

Being asked your age within minutes is completely normal and not nosy. It tells both of you which kinship words and speech level to use. Answer easily and ask back — it's a bonding move, not an interrogation.

A first meeting 첫 만남

YOU

안녕하세요! 저는 제임스라고 해요. 미국에서 왔어요.

annyeonghaseyo! jeoneun jeimseu-rago haeyo. migugeseo wasseoyo.

Hi! I'm James. I'm from the US.

HER

와, 한국어 잘하시네요! 만나서 반가워요.

wa, hangugeo jalhasineyo! mannaseo bangawoyo.

Wow, your Korean is good! Nice to meet you.

YOU

아니에요, 아직 배우고 있어요. 이름이 어떻게 되세요?

anieyo, ajik baeugo isseoyo. ireumi eotteoke doeseyo?

Not at all, I'm still learning. What's your name?

HER

저는 수진이에요.

jeoneun Sujin-ieyo.

I'm Sujin.

TIP — DEFLECT THE PRAISE

They **will** say your Korean is great. Don't agree — wave it off with *아니에요* (anieyo, "not at all"). Modesty about your own ability is its own little charm here.

02 Low-Pressure Openers 가벼운 말 걸기

The best openers are situational and light — a comment, a small ask, a shared moment. No big lines. Give the other person an easy, no-stakes way to respond.

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
저기요, 혹시...	<i>jeogiyo, hoksi...</i>	Excuse me, by any chance...	softest way to start
저기요 <i>jeogiyo</i> excuse me 혹시 <i>hoksi</i> by any chance			
여기 자주 와요?	<i>yeogi jaju wayo?</i>	Do you come here often?	classic, works at cafés/bars
여기 <i>yeogi</i> here 자주 <i>jaju</i> often 와요 <i>wayo</i> (do you) come?			
이 근처에 맛집知道吗?	<i>i geuncheoe matjip arayo?</i>	Know any good food spots nearby?	easy, useful, friendly
이 <i>i</i> this 근처 <i>geuncheo</i> nearby 에 <i>e</i> at/in 맛집 <i>matjip</i> good restaurant 아요 <i>arayo</i> (do you) know?			
그거 뭐예요? 맛있어 보여요	<i>geugeo mwoyeyo?</i> <i>masisseo boyeoyo</i>	What's that? It looks good	comment on their drink/food
그거 <i>geugeo</i> that 뭐예요 <i>mwoyeyo</i> what is it? 맛있어 <i>masisseo</i> delicious 보여요 <i>boyeoyo</i> it looks			
사진 좀 찍어 주실 수 있어요?	<i>sajin jom jjigeo jusil su isseoyo?</i>	Could you take a photo?	natural, low-stakes ask
사진 <i>sajin</i> photo 좀 <i>jom</i> (softener) a bit 찍어 <i>jjigeo</i> take 주실 수 있어요 <i>jusil su isseoyo</i> could you do (for me)?			
와이파이 비번知道吗?	<i>waipai bibeon arayo?</i>	Know the WiFi password?	café opener
와이파이 <i>waipai</i> WiFi 비번 <i>bibeon</i> password 아요 <i>arayo</i> (do you) know?			
혹시 한국 분이세요?	<i>hoksi hanguk buniseyo?</i>	Are you Korean, by chance?	opens a "where are you from" chat
혹시 <i>hoksi</i> by any chance 한국 <i>hanguk</i> Korea 분 <i>bun</i> person (honorific) 이세요 <i>iseyo</i> are you? (polite)			

INFO — 저기요 IS YOUR MAGIC WORD

저기요 (jeogiyo) is the all-purpose "excuse me" — to get a stranger's attention, call a server, or start a chat. Pair it with 혹시 (hoksi, "by any chance...") to sound gentle and unintrusive.

03 Keeping It Going 대화 이어가기

Conversation is a rally, not a serve. Ask a question, react genuinely, then offer something about yourself so it bounces back. These questions and reactions keep the ball in the air.

Questions that open people up 질문

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
무슨 일 하세요?	<i>museun il haseyo?</i>	What do you do?	work/study
무슨 <i>museun</i> what kind of 일 <i>il</i> work 하세요 <i>haseyo</i> (do you) do? (polite)			
취미가 뭐예요?	<i>chwimiga mwoyeyo?</i>	What are your hobbies?	easy lane to common ground
취미 <i>chwimi</i> hobby 가 <i>ga</i> (subject) 뭐예요 <i>mwoyeyo</i> what is it?			
주말에 보통 뭐 해요?	<i>jumare botong mwo haeyo?</i>	What do you usually do on weekends?	opens future-plan talk
주말 <i>jumal</i> weekend 에 <i>e</i> on 보통 <i>botong</i> usually 뭐 <i>mwo</i> what 해요 <i>haeyo</i> (do you) do?			
어떤 음악 좋아해요?	<i>eotteon eumak joahaeyo?</i>	What music do you like?	K-pop, indie, anything
어떤 <i>eotteon</i> what kind of 음악 <i>eumak</i> music 좋아해요 <i>joahaeyo</i> (do you) like?			
매운 거 잘 먹어요?	<i>maeun geo jal meogeoyo?</i>	Can you handle spicy food?	fun, leads to food plans
매운 <i>maeun</i> spicy 거 <i>geo</i> thing/stuff 잘 <i>jal</i> well 먹어요 <i>meogeoyo</i> (do you) eat?			
한국 음식 중에 뭐 제일 좋아해요?	<i>hanguk eumsik junde mwo jeil joahaeyo?</i>	Favorite Korean food?	everyone has an answer
한국 <i>hanguk</i> Korean 음식 <i>eumsik</i> food 중에 <i>junde</i> among 뭐 <i>mwo</i> what 제일 <i>jeil</i> most 좋아해요 <i>joahaeyo</i> (do you) like?			

Reactions that say "I'm listening" 반응

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
아 진짜요?	<i>a jinjjayo?</i>	Oh really?	polite version of 진짜?
아 <i>a</i> oh 진짜요 <i>jinjjayo</i> really? (polite)			
와, 멋있다	<i>wa, meositta</i>	Wow, that's cool	admiration
와 <i>wa</i> wow 멋있다 <i>meositta</i> (that's) cool			
완전 공감해요	<i>wanjeon gonggamhaeyo</i>	I totally relate	builds connection
완전 <i>wanjeon</i> totally 공감해요 <i>gonggamhaeyo</i> (I) relate/agree			
저도요!	<i>jeodoyo!</i>	Me too!	find the overlaps
재밌겠다	<i>jaemitgetda</i>	That sounds fun	warm, encouraging
더 얘기해 줘요	<i>deo yaegihae jwoyo</i>	Tell me more	gold — shows real interest
더 <i>deo</i> more 얘기해 <i>yaegihae</i> talk/tell 줘요 <i>jwoyo</i> please (for me)			

TIP — THE 1-2-3 RHYTHM

(1) React, (2) ask a follow-up, (3) share a small piece of yourself. "진짜요? 어디 여행 가봤어요? 저는 부산 가봤어요" — Really? Where have you traveled? I've been to Busan. That loop can run all night.

04 Getting the Contact 연락처 — 카카오톡

In Korea the entire social world runs on **KakaoTalk** (카카오톡, "Kakao"). Not getting their Kakao is like not getting a number anywhere else. Ask before the energy dips, frame it casually around staying in touch.

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
우리 카톡 할래요?	<i>uri katok hallaeyo?</i>	Want to exchange Kakao?	카톡 = casual for KakaoTalk
우리 <i>uri</i> we/us 카톡 <i>katok</i> KakaoTalk 할래요 <i>hallaeyo</i> shall we do?			
카카오 아이디 뭐예요?	<i>kakao aidi mwoyeyo?</i>	What's your Kakao ID?	straightforward
카카오 <i>kakao</i> Kakao 아이디 <i>aidi</i> ID 뭐예요 <i>mwoyeyo</i> what is it?			
번호 좀 알려줄 수 있어요?	<i>beonho jom allyeojul su isseoyo?</i>	Could I get your number?	if Kakao feels too forward
번호 <i>beonho</i> number 좀 <i>jom</i> (softener) a bit 알려줄 수 있어요 <i>allyeojul su isseoyo</i> could you tell (me)?			
나중에 또 봐요!	<i>najunge tto bwayo!</i>	Let's hang out again!	sets up a next time
나중에 <i>najunge</i> later 또 <i>tto</i> again 봐요 <i>bwayo</i> let's see (each other)			
제 큐알 코드 보여드릴게요	<i>je kyual kodeu boyeodeurilgeyo</i>	I'll show you my QR code	Kakao adds via QR scan
제 <i>je</i> my 큐알 코드 <i>kyual kodeu</i> QR code 보여드릴게요 <i>boyeodeurilgeyo</i> (I'll) show (you)			
답에 커피 한잔 해요	<i>dame keopi hanjan haeyo</i>	Let's grab a coffee sometime	soft next-step
답에 <i>dame</i> next time 커피 <i>keopi</i> coffee 한잔 <i>hanjan</i> a glass/cup 해요 <i>haeyo</i> let's do			

Your first message 첫 메시지

Send it the **same day**, light and specific. Reference something you actually talked about so it doesn't read as generic.

YOU

수진 씨~ 오늘 만나서 진짜 반가웠어요 😊

Sujin-ssi~ oneul mannaseo jinjja bangawosseoyo

Sujin, it was really great meeting you today 😊

YOU

아까 말한 그 떡볶이집 꼭 가봐야겠어요!

akka malhan geu tteokbokki-jip kkok gabwayagesseoyo!

I've gotta try that tteokbokki place you mentioned!

HER

ㅋㅋㅋ 저도 반가웠어요! 같이 가요 ㅎㅎ

kkk jeodo bangawosseoyo! gachi gayo hh

Haha so was !! Let's go together :)

CULTURAL NOTE — ㅋㅋ AND ㅎㅎ

Texting runs on consonant laughter: ㅋㅋㅋ (k-k-k = "haha") and ㅎㅎ (a softer giggle). Using them makes you sound relaxed and friendly. A reply with no ㅋㅋ or emoji can read as cold — match their energy.

★ Cutesy disarmers 귀여운 한마디

These are **golden**. Self-aware, humble, a little silly — they melt a stranger's guard, earn a laugh, and quietly invite them to help and teach you. Being an endearing foreigner who tries beats being slick. Deploy them when you fumble, when there's an awkward pause, or just to be charming.

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
한국어 아직 배우는 중이에요 ㅎㅎ	<i>hangugeo ajik baeuneun jung-ieyo (hangugo a-jik...)</i>	"My Korean's still a work in progress~"	All-purpose. The moment you fumble anything.
한국어 <i>hangugeo</i> Korean 아직 <i>ajik</i> still 배우는 중 <i>baeuneun jung</i> in the middle of learning 이에요 <i>ieyo</i> (I) am ㅎㅎ <i>hh</i> (soft laugh)			
제 한국어가 좀 엉망이죠? ㅋㅋ	<i>je hangugeo-ga jom eongmang-ijyo? (...ong-mang-ee-jyo)</i>	"My Korean's a bit of a mess, huh? Haha"	Owning a clumsy sentence — laugh at yourself first.
제 <i>je</i> my 한국어 <i>hangugeo</i> Korean 가 <i>ga</i> (subject) 좀 <i>jom</i> a bit 엉망 <i>eongmang</i> a mess 이죠 <i>ijyo</i> isn't it? ㅋㅋ <i>kk</i> (haha)			
저한테 잘해주세요~ 아직 초보예요	<i>jeohante jalhaejuseyo~ ajik chobo-yeyo (...cho-bo-yeyo)</i>	"Be nice to me~ I'm still a beginner"	Flirty-cute. Mock-pleading with a grin.
저한테 <i>jeohante</i> to me 잘해주세요 <i>jalhaejuseyo</i> please be nice 아직 <i>ajik</i> still 초보 <i>chobo</i> beginner 예요 <i>yeyo</i> (I) am			
이거 맞게 말한 거예요?	<i>igeo matge malhan geo-yeyo? (...mat-ge...)</i>	"Did I say that right?"	Right after a phrase — invites a gentle correction.
이거 <i>igeo</i> this 맞게 <i>matge</i> correctly 말한 거 <i>malhan geo</i> the said thing 예요 <i>yeyo</i> is it?			

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
한국어 한 단어만 가르쳐 주세요!	<i>hangugeo han daneo-man gareuchyeo juseyo! (...han da-no-man...)</i>	"Teach me just one Korean word!"	Turns them into your teacher — instant bonding.
한국어 <i>hangugeo</i> Korean 한 <i>han</i> one 단어 <i>daneo</i> word 만 <i>man</i> just/only 가르쳐 주세요 <i>gareuchyeo juseyo</i> please teach (me)			
조금만 천천히 말해 주실래요? ㅎㅎ	<i>jogeum-man cheoncheonhi malhae jusillaeyo? (...chon-chon-hee...)</i>	"Could you speak a little slowly for me? Hehe"	When they're going fast — sweet, not embarrassing.
조금만 <i>jogeum-man</i> just a little 천천히 <i>cheoncheonhi</i> slowly 말해 주실래요 <i>malhae jusillaeyo</i> could you speak (for me)? ㅎㅎ <i>hh</i> (soft laugh)			
소주 한잔하면 제 한국어 늘어요 ㅋㅋ	<i>soju hanjan-hamyeon je hangugeo neureoyo (...nu-ro-yo)</i>	"My Korean gets better after a soju, lol"	Over drinks — playful and very relatable.
소주 <i>soju</i> soju 한잔하면 <i>hanjan-hamyeon</i> if (I) have a drink 제 <i>je</i> my 한국어 <i>hangugeo</i> Korean 늘어요 <i>neureoyo</i> improves ㅋㅋ <i>kk</i> (haha)			
이 말 하루 종일 연습했어요!	<i>i mal haru jongil yeonseup-haesseyo! (...yon-sup-hae-sso-yo)</i>	"I practised this one line all day!"	After nailing a sentence — proud and adorable.
이 <i>i</i> this 말 <i>mal</i> phrase/words 하루 종일 <i>haru jongil</i> all day long 연습했어요 <i>yeonseuphaesseyo</i> (I) practised			
현지 사람만 쓰는 말 알려주세요!	<i>hyeonji saram-man sseuneun mal allyeojuseyo! (hyon-ji...)</i>	"Teach me something only locals say!"	Slang request — makes you the fun, curious one.
현지 <i>hyeonji</i> local 사람 <i>saram</i> people 만 <i>man</i> only 쓰는 <i>sseuneun</i> that use 말 <i>mal</i> words 알려주세요 <i>allyeojuseyo</i> please tell (me)			

KOREAN	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
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이거 한국어로 뭐라고 해요?

igeo hangugeo-ro mwo-rago haeyo? (...mwo-ra-go...)

"What's this called in Korean?"

Point at anything — keeps the chat rolling.

이거 *igeo* this 한국어 *hangugeo* Korean 로 *ro* in 뭐라고 *mwo-rago* what (called) 해요 *haeyo* (do you) say?

제 한국어 이상하면 말해주세요 ㅎㅎ

je hangugeo isang-hamyeon malhaejuseyo (...ee-sang...)

"Tell me if my Korean sounds weird, haha"

Invites teasing and correction — disarms the wall.

제 *je* my 한국어 *hangugeo* Korean 이상하면 *isang-hamyeon* if (it's) weird 말해주세요 *malhaejuseyo* please tell (me) ㅎㅎ *hh* (soft laugh)

★ 사실 사람들이랑 얘기하고 싶어서 한국어 배워요

sasil saramdeul-irang yaegi-hago sip-eoseo hangugeo baewoyo (...yae-gi...)

"Honestly, I'm learning Korean just to talk to people like you"

★ Smooth. Say it once, sincerely, with eye contact.

사실 *sasil* honestly 사람들 *saramdeul* people 이랑 *irang* with 얘기하고 싶어서 *yaegi-hago sipeoseo* because (I) want to talk 한국어 *hangugeo* Korean 배워요 *baewoyo* (I) learn

DELIVERY IS EVERYTHING

Say these with a smile and a shrug — never as a real apology; the charm is the lightness (a little ㅎㅎ), with zero neediness. Done right, it instantly turns a stranger into a teammate who's rooting for you.