KR

KOREAN LESSON

Basic Conversation 2 · Chapter 4 · Describing

🎨 Describing People & Things — 사람과 물건 묘사하기

*You can now talk about your day, your hobbies and your plans. This chapter teaches you to **describe**: people (tall, kind, funny), things (big, small, expensive, pretty) and colours. You will also meet your first past-tense forms (재미있었어요, "it was fun"), which Chapter 9 teaches in full. This is the **last chapter with a romanization line under every dialog line**: from Chapter 5 on, dialogs carry a short "Hard words" note instead, while the tables keep the "Say it" column.*

eo = ㅓ (short, open "uh") **eu** = ㅡ (unrounded "oo")

kk, pp, ss, jj = tense (tight, unaspirated) consonants

[ ] = how the word is actually said, where it differs from the spelling

① A New Friend — 어떤 사람이에요?

A:

새 친구는 어떤 사람이에요?

Sae chinguneun eotteon saramieyo?

What kind of person is your new friend?

B:

키가 크고 머리가 짧아요.

Kiga keugo meoriga jjalbayo.

He's tall and has short hair.

A:

성격은 어때요?

Seonggyeogeun eottaeyo?

What's his personality like?

B:

아주 친절하고 재미있어요.

Aju chinjeolhago jaemiisseoyo.

Very kind and funny.

② The Teacher — 어떤 분이에요?

A:

한국어 선생님은 어떤 분이에요?

Hangugeo seonsaengnimeun eotteon bunieyo?

What kind of person is your Korean teacher?

B:

친절하고 조용한 분이에요.

Chinjeolhago joyonghan bunieyo.

A kind and quiet person.

A:

젊은 분이에요?

Jeolmeun bunieyo?

Is the teacher young?

B:

네, 아주 멋있어요!

Ne, aju meosisseoyo!

Yes, and very cool!

③ A Bag — 어떤 가방이에요?

A:

어떤 가방이에요?

Eotteon gabangieyo?

What kind of bag is it?

B:

크고 검은색이에요.

Keugo geomeunsaegieyo.

It's big and black.

A:

비싸요?

Bissayo?

Is it expensive?

B:

조금 비싸지만 아주 예뻐요.

Jogeum bissajiman aju yeppeoyo.

A little expensive, but very pretty.

④ A New Flat — 새 집은 어때요?

A:

새 집은 어때요?

Sae jibeun eottaeyo?

How's the new place?

B:

작지만 깨끗해요.

Jakjiman kkaekkeutaeyo.

Small, but clean.

A:

조용해요?

Joyonghaeyo?

Is it quiet?

B:

네, 아주 조용해요. 그리고 밝아요.

Ne, aju joyonghaeyo. Geurigo balgayo.

Yes, very quiet. And bright.

⑤ Last Night's Film — 영화 어땠어요?

A:

어제 영화 어땠어요?

Eoje yeonghwa eottaesseoyo?

How was the film yesterday?

B:

정말 재미있었어요!

Jeongmal jaemiisseosseoyo!

It was really good!

A:

배우들은 어땠어요?

Baeudeureun eottaesseoyo?

And the actors?

B:

⑥ Two Friends (casual) — 남자친구는 어떤 사람이야?

A:

네 남자친구는 어떤 사람이야?

Ne namjachinguneun eotteon saramiya?

What's your boyfriend like?

B:

키가 크고 착해. 그리고 귀여워!

Kiga keugo chakae. Geurigo gwiyeowo!

Tall and kind. And cute!

A:

잘생겼어?

Jalsaenggyeosseo?

Is he handsome?

모두 멋있었어요. 특히 주인공이 잘생겼어요.

Modu meosisseosseoyo. Teuki juingongi jalsaenggyeosseoyo.

They were all great. The lead is especially handsome.

B:

응, 완전 내 스타일이야!

Eung, wanjeon nae seutairiya!

Yeah, totally my type!

🔑 Key Phrases — 중요한 표현

SITUATION	POLITE	CASUAL
What kind of person is ...?	...은/는 어떤 사람이에요? *...eun/neun eotteon saramieyo?*	...은/는 어떤 사람이야? *...eun/neun eotteon saramiya?*
What's it like?	어때요? *eottaeyo?*	어때? *eottae?*
What colour is it?	무슨 색이에요? *museun saegieyo?*	무슨 색이야? *museun saegiya?*
It's ... but ...	...지만 ...아요/어요. *...jiman ...ayo/eoyo.*	...지만 ...아/어. *...jiman ...a/eo.*
How was it?	어땠어요? *eottaesseoyo?*	어땠어? *eottaesseo?*
It was really good!	정말 좋았어요! *jeongmal joasseoyo!*	진짜 좋았어! *jinjja joasseo!*

🔤 Three Descriptive Words — 형용사

Korean has no separate adjective ending: a word like 크다 ("to be big") conjugates exactly like a verb.

WORD	EVERYDAY POLITE (-요)	FORMAL (-ㅂ니다)	CASUAL
to be big; tall (크다)	커요 *keoyo*	큽니다 *keumnida*	커 *keo*
to be small (작다)	작아요 *jagayo*	작습니다 *jakseumnida*	작아 *jaga*
to be pretty (예쁘다)	예뻐요 *yeppeoyo*	예쁩니다 *yeppeumnida*	예뻐 *yeppeo*

The -요 rule: if the last vowel of the stem is ㅏ **or** ㅗ, add **-아요** (작다 → 작아요); otherwise add **-어요** (길다 → 길어요); **-하다** words become **-해요** (친절해요). Stems ending in ㅡ drop it: 크다 → 커요, 예쁘다 → 예뻐요, 바쁘다 → 바빠요 ("busy").

🧱 Five Tools for Describing

1. A person's features: 이/가 + description

In Korean you often say that a person's *feature* is big, long or short: 키가 커요 ("he's tall", literally "height is big"), 머리가 길어요 ("her hair is long"). The feature takes **이/가**, and the person can be added first with 은/는: 친구는 키가 커요 (Korean Grammar 1, chapters 3 and 4).

ENGLISH	KOREAN	SAY IT
tall; short (height)	키가 커요 / 작아요	*ki-ga keo-yo / ja-ga-yo*
long hair; short hair	머리가 길어요 / 짧아요	*meo-ri-ga gi-reo-yo / jjal-ba-yo*
kind (of character)	착해요	*cha-kae-yo*
friendly; helpful	친절해요	*chin-jeol-hae-yo*
quiet	조용해요	*jo-yong-hae-yo*
young	젊어요	*jeol-meo-yo*

ENGLISH	KOREAN	SAY IT
cute	귀여워요	*gwi-yeo-wo-yo*
cool; stylish; good-looking	멋있어요	*meo-si-sseo-yo*
handsome; good-looking	잘생겼어요	*jal-saeng-gyeo-sseo-yo*

잘생겼어요 looks like a past tense but is the normal way to say "(he) is handsome". **귀엽다** is a "ㅂ-irregular" word (귀여워요, not 귀엽어요); Chapter 6 explains the pattern, so just learn it as a word for now.

2. Joining descriptions — 그리고, -고 and -지만

Chain two descriptions with **-고** (Chapter 1): 크고 예뻐요 ("big and pretty"). To start a new sentence with "and", use **그리고**. For "but", attach **-지만** to the stem of the first word: 작지만 깨끗해요 ("small but clean"). A looser "but / by the way" at the start of a sentence is **그런데** (as in Chapter 2). **-지만** never changes with the vowel, so it is the easiest ending in Korean.

3. A describing word before a noun — -(으)ㄴ

To say "a big bag" or "a quiet person", put the describing word *before* the noun. After a vowel stem add **-ㄴ**; after a consonant stem add **-은**; **있다 / 없다** words use **-는**.

WORD	BEFORE A NOUN	EXAMPLE
크다 big	큰 *keun*	큰 가방 a big bag
작다 small	작은 *jageun*	작은 집 a small house
예쁘다 pretty	예쁜 *yeppeun*	예쁜 옷 pretty clothes
좋다 good	좋은 *joeun*	좋은 사람 a good person
조용하다 quiet	조용한 *joyonghan*	조용한 분 a quiet person
맛있다 delicious	맛있는 *masinneun*	맛있는 음식 tasty food

4. Colours — 색깔

Ask 무슨 색이에요? ("what colour is it?"). Colour nouns end in **색** ("colour"); to use one before a noun, take the form in the table: 빨간색 가방 ("a red bag").

COLOUR	KOREAN	SAY IT	COLOUR	KOREAN	SAY IT
red	빨간색	*ppal-gan-saek*	green	초록색	*cho-rok-saek*
blue	파란색	*pa-ran-saek*	black	검은색	*geo-meun-saek*
yellow	노란색	*no-ran-saek*	white	하얀색	*ha-yan-saek*

5. A first look at the past — -았/었어요

To say how something *was*, replace the **-아요/-어요** ending by **-았어요/-었어요**: 좋아요 → 좋았어요 ("it was good"), 재미있어요 → 재미있었어요, 멋있어요 → 멋있었어요. For -하다 words it is **-했어요**, and 어때요? becomes 어땠어요? ("how was it?"). Use these ready-made forms for reacting to a film, a meal or a trip; Chapter 9 teaches the whole pattern.

📖 Vocabulary — 어휘

#	KOREAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE
1	사람	*sa-ram*	person	noun
2	분	*bun*	person (respectful)	noun
3	성격	*seong-kkyeok*	personality; character	noun
4	키	*ki*	height	noun
5	머리	*meo-ri*	head; hair	noun
6	색	*saek*	colour	noun
7	가방	*ga-bang*	bag	noun

#	KOREAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE
8	배우	*bae-u*	actor; actress	noun
9	새	*sae*	new (before a noun)	determiner
10	크다	*keu-da*	to be big; tall	adjective
11	작다	*jak-tta*	to be small	adjective
12	길다	*gil-da*	to be long	adjective
13	짧다	*jjal-tta*	to be short (length)	adjective
14	예쁘다	*ye-ppeu-da*	to be pretty	adjective
15	귀엽다	*gwi-yeop-tta*	to be cute	adjective
16	멋있다	*meo-sit-tta*	to be cool; stylish	adjective
17	착하다	*cha-ka-da*	to be kind (character)	adjective
18	친절하다	*chin-jeol-ha-da*	to be friendly; helpful	adjective
19	조용하다	*jo-yong-ha-da*	to be quiet	adjective
20	젊다	*jeom-tta*	to be young	adjective

사람 vs 분

사람 is the plain word for "person". **분** is the respectful word, used for teachers, elders, customers and anyone you want to speak of politely: 어떤 분이에요? asked about a teacher is polite; asked about a friend, 어떤 사람이에요? is natural. Never use 분 for yourself.

Compliments with Care

Comments on appearance are common among friends (예뻐요, 멋있어요), but Koreans are often blunter than English speakers about weight, age or height, and that can sound rude in English. Stay

with safe words: 멋있어요 (cool), 예뻐요 (pretty), 친절해요 (kind). When someone compliments you, the humble answer is 아니에요 ("no, not at all"), followed by 감사합니다.

Blue Light, Green Light

파란색 is "blue", but a Korean traffic light that says go is a **파란불** ("blue light"). The old word covered both blue and green; the newer **초록색** is "green" for most things. Do not be confused when the "blue" light turns on.

As Heard in Dramas — 드라마에서

Friends use intensifiers that never appear in textbooks: **완전** ("totally"), as in 완전 예뻐!; **진짜** ("really"); and the all-purpose exclamation **대박!** ("wow, amazing!"). Both **스타일** ("style, type") and **내 스타일이야** ("he's my type") are very common in romantic dramas.

Grammar Pointer

The -요 rule, the ㅡ-drop and the ㅂ-irregular come back in Korean Basic Conversation 2, Chapter 6 (weather), and the full past tense in Chapter 9. The particles 이/가 and 은/는 are in Korean Grammar 1, chapters 3 and 4. From the next chapter, dialogs have no romanization line under each sentence.

✍️ Try It Yourself — 연습

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Say "My friend is tall and kind."

▼ Show answer

친구는 키가 크고 착해요.

2. Say "It's small, but it's pretty."

▼ Show answer

작지만 예뻐요.

3. Ask what kind of person your Korean teacher is (respectfully).

▼ Show answer

한국어 선생님은 어떤 분이에요?

4. Ask what colour the bag is, then answer "It's a red bag."

▼ Show answer

무슨 색이에요? — 빨간색 가방이에요.

5. Say "The film was fun."

▼ Show answer

영화가 재미있었어요.

6. Tell a friend casually, "She's really pretty!"

▼ Show answer

완전 예뻐! (or 진짜 예뻐!)