KR

KOREAN LESSON

Basic Conversation 3 · Chapter 7 · My Story

Korean Basic Conversation 3

Chapter 7 · Telling Your Story: Childhood, School & Life So Far

📜 Telling Your Story — 내 이야기

Telling someone about your life means linking events in time and explaining how things turned out: "when I was a child…", "I came to like it…", "…you see, I had no choice". The three tools are ***-(으)ㄹ 때*** *(when),* ***-게 되다*** *(come to be; end up) and* ***-거든요*** *(the friendly "you see" explanation). The vocabulary covers school stages, birthplace and graduation. Dialogs have a* ***Hard words*** *note, and a short* ***reading text*** *closes the chapter.*

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

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

① Where Are You From? — 어디에서 태어났어요?

A:

고향이 어디예요?

Where is your hometown?

B:

저는 영국 리버풀에서 태어나서 거기에서 자랐어요.

I was born in Liverpool in the UK and grew up there.

A:

그럼 한국에는 언제 오게 됐어요?

Then when did you come to Korea?

B:

대학교를 졸업한 후에 회사 일 때문에 오게 됐어요.

After graduating from university I ended up coming because of work.

② Childhood — 어렸을 때

A:

어렸을 때 어떤 아이였어요?

What kind of child were you when you were little?

B:

조용하고 책을 좋아하는 아이였어요. 학교에서 도서관에 자주 갔어요.

I was a quiet child who liked books. I often went to the library at school.

A:

초등학교 때 꿈이 뭐였어요?

What was your dream in primary school?

B:

그때는 선생님이 되고 싶었어요. 지금은 다른 일을 하지만요.

Back then I wanted to be a teacher. Now I do something else, though.

A:

A:

처음에 한국 생활이 힘들지 않았어요?

Wasn't life in Korea hard at first?

B:

좀 힘들었어요. 한국어를 하나도 몰랐거든요.

It was a bit hard. You see, I didn't know any Korean.

Hard words: 고향 go-hyang · 태어나서 tae-eo-na-seo · 자랐어요 ja-ra-sseo-yo · 오게 됐어요 o-ge dwae-sseo-yo · 졸업한 jo-reo-pan · 몰랐거든요 mol-lat-kkeo-deun-nyo

저는 어릴 때 축구 선수가 되고 싶었어요.

When I was little I wanted to be a football player.

Hard words: 어렸을 때 eo-ryeot-sseul ttae · 아이 a-i · 도서관 do-seo-gwan · 초등학교 때 cho-deung-hak-kkyo ttae · 그때 geu-ttae · 축구 선수 chuk-kku seon-su

③ School and University — 학교 이야기

A:

대학교에서 무엇을 전공했어요?

What did you major in at university?

B:

경제학을 전공했어요. 그런데 졸업할 때쯤 컴퓨터에 관심이 생겼어요.

I majored in economics. But around the time of graduation I became interested in computers.

A:

그래서 지금 그 일을 하게 됐어요?

So is that how you came to do that work now?

B:

네. 친구가 소개해 줘서 작은 회사에서 일하게 됐어요.

Yes. A friend introduced me, so I ended up working at a small company.

A:

인생은 정말 알 수 없네요.

Life really is unpredictable.

④ Korean Age and Real Age — 몇 살이에요?

A:

실례지만 올해 나이가 어떻게 되세요?

Excuse me, how old are you this year?

B:

만으로 서른 살이에요. 한국 나이로는 서른하나나 서른둘이에요.

I'm thirty in international age. In Korean age I'd be thirty-one or thirty-two.

A:

요즘은 만 나이를 쓰는 사람이 많지만 친구끼리는 아직도 한국 나이로 말해요.

These days many people use international age, but friends still often talk in Korean age.

B:

그래서 처음 만나면 몇 년생인지 물어보는 경우가 많거든요.

So when people first meet, they often ask what year you were born. You see.

Hard words: 전공했어요 jeon-gong-hae-sseo-yo · 경제학 gyeong-je-hak · 졸업할 때쯤 jo-reo-pal ttae-jjeum · 관심 gwan-sim · 소개해 줘서 so-gae-hae jwo-seo · 인생 in-saeng

A:

저는 구십오 년생이에요.

I was born in '95.

Hard words: 나이 na-i · 만으로 ma-neu-ro · 서른 하나 seo-reun-ha-na · 한국 나이 han-guk na-i · 몇 년생 myeot nyeon-saeng · 경우 gyeong-u

⑤ Big Changes — 인생의 변화

A:

결혼은 언제 하게 됐어요?

When did you get married?

B:

작년에요. 한국어 수업에서 만난 사람과 결혼하게 됐어요.

Last year. I ended up marrying someone I met in Korean class.

A:

정말요? 한국어를 배울 때 인연이 시작됐네요.

Really? So it began when you were learning Korean.

B:

네. 정말 우연이었어요. 어릴 때는 한국을 잘 몰랐거든요.

Yes. It was pure chance. When I was little I didn't know much about Korea, you see.

A:

앞으로 어디에서 살고 싶어요?

Where would you like to live in the future?

B:

일단 여기에서 살고 나중에 고향에 돌아갈 수도 있어요.

⑥ Two Friends (casual) — 우리 어렸을 때

A:

우리 어렸을 때 매일 놀이터에서 놀았지?

When we were little we played at the playground every day, didn't we?

B:

맞아! 너는 항상 해가 질 때까지 안 들어갔지.

Right! You never went home until the sun set.

A:

엄마한테 맨날 혼났거든. 근데 지금은 일 때문에 못 놀아.

I used to get scolded by mum all the time. But now I can't play because of work.

B:

어른이 되면 시간이 없어. 그래도 우리 아직 친구지.

Time vanishes once you're an adult. But we're still friends, right?

A:

당연하지! 다음 주말에 만나자.

Of course! Let's meet next weekend.

Hard words: 놀이터 no-ri-teo · 놀았지 no-rat-jji · 해가 질 때 hae-ga jil ttae · 맨날 maen-nal · 혼났거든 hon-nat-kkeo-deun · 당연하지 dang-yeon-ha-ji

For now here, and later I might go back to my hometown.

Hard words: 결혼 gyeol-hon · 수업 su-eop · 인연 i-nyeon · 시작됐네요 si-jak-dwaen-ne-yo · 우연 u-yeon · 일단 il-dan

🔑 Key Phrases — 중요한 표현

SITUATION	POLITE	CASUAL
Where were you born?	어디에서 태어났어요?	어디서 태어났어?
Where did you grow up?	어디에서 자랐어요?	어디서 자랐어?
What did you study?	무엇을 전공했어요?	뭐 전공했어?
When I was little...	어렸을 때...	어릴 때...
I ended up...	...게 됐어요.	...게 됐어.
What year were you born?	몇 년생이에요?	몇 년생이야?

🔤 Three Verbs for Life Stories — 동사

VERB	EVERYDAY POLITE (-요)	PAST (-았/었어요)	CASUAL
to be born (태어나다)	태어나요	태어났어요	태어났어
to grow up (자라다)	자라요	자랐어요	자랐어
to graduate (졸업하다)	졸업해요	졸업했어요	졸업했어

🧱 Three Tools for Telling a Story

1. "When..." — -(으)ㄹ 때

Attach **-ㄹ 때** to a vowel stem and **-을 때** to a consonant stem: 학교에 갈 때 ("when I go to school"), 먹을 때, 한국어를 배울 때. It is the same form as the future modifier from Chapter 4, followed by **때** ("time"). The tense of the *last* verb tells you whether it is past or present. For a *past* moment, attach the past ending first: 어렸을 때 (when I was small), 초등학교에 다녔을 때. With a noun, use **noun + 때**: 초등학교 때 ("when I was at primary school"), 방학 때. Don't confuse it with **-기 전에** (before) and **-(으)ㄴ 후에** (after) from Chapter 2.

2. "Come to / end up" — -게 되다

Add **-게 되다** to a verb or adjective stem when a situation *comes about*, often not entirely by your own choice: 한국에 오게 됐어요 ("I ended up coming to Korea"), 그 일을 하게 됐어요 ("I came to do that job"), 한국 음식을 좋아하게 됐어요 ("I came to like Korean food"). It is usually used in the past (**-게 됐어요**) to explain how things turned out, or in the future (**-게 될 거예요**) for what is likely to happen.

3. "You see..." — -거든요

The sentence ending **-거든요** gives a friendly explanation or reason, as if saying "you see, ..." or "the thing is, ...". It follows a stem directly: 한국어를 몰랐거든요 ("I didn't know any Korean, you see"), 바쁘거든요. For the past, put the past ending before it (**-았/었거든요**). The casual form is -거든. It also introduces a new topic or an answer that you expect the listener not to know. Use it for background, not for plain statements, and not with a superior as a blunt excuse.

PATTERN	EXAMPLE	ENGLISH
-(으)ㄹ 때	어렸을 때 축구를 좋아했어요.	When I was little I liked football.
-게 되다	친구 때문에 한국어를 배우게 됐어요.	I ended up learning Korean because of a friend.
-거든요	제가 요리를 못하거든요.	You see, I can't cook.

📖 Reading — 읽기: 제임스 씨의 이야기

제임스 씨의 이야기

제임스 씨는 영국 리버풀에서 태어나서 거기에서 자랐습니다. 어렸을 때 책을 좋아하는 조용한 아이였습니다. 대학교에서는 경제학을 공부했지만 졸업할 때쯤 컴퓨터에 관심이 생겼습니다. 졸업한 후에 작은 회사에서 일하게 됐고, 그 회사 때문에 한국에 오게 됐습니다. 처음에는 한국어를 하나도 몰랐거든요. 그래서 한국어 수업에 다니기 시작했습니다. 수업에서 지금의 아내를 만났고 작년에 결혼했습니다. 제임스 씨는 지금 서울에서 살고 있지만 나중에 고향에 돌아갈 수도 있습니다.

Word list: 아내 *(wife)* · 관심이 생기다 *(to become interested)* · 다니기 시작하다 *(to start attending)* · 나중에 *(later)*

True or false? (맞으면 O, 틀리면 X)

1. 제임스 씨는 리버풀에서 태어나서 자랐습니다.
2. 제임스 씨는 대학교에서 컴퓨터를 전공했습니다.
3. 제임스 씨는 회사 때문에 한국에 오게 됐습니다.
4. 제임스 씨는 한국어 수업에서 지금의 아내를 만났습니다.

▼ Show answers

1. O · 2. X (he studied economics; the interest in computers came around graduation) · 3. O · 4. O

📖 Vocabulary — 어휘

#	KOREAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE
1	고향	*go-hyang*	hometown	noun
2	초등학교	*cho-deung-hak-kkyo*	primary school	noun
3	중학교	*jung-hak-kkyo*	middle school	noun
4	고등학교	*go-deung-hak-kkyo*	high school	noun
5	대학교	*dae-hak-kkyo*	university	noun
6	전공	*jeon-gong*	major; field of study	noun

#	KOREAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE
7	졸업	*jo-reop*	graduation	noun
8	나이	*na-i*	age	noun
9	인생	*in-saeng*	life (one's whole life)	noun
10	꿈	*kkum*	dream	noun
11	결혼	*gyeol-hon*	marriage	noun
12	어른	*eo-reun*	adult; elder	noun
13	태어나다	*tae-eo-na-da*	to be born	verb
14	자라다	*ja-ra-da*	to grow up	verb
15	졸업하다	*jo-eo-pa-da*	to graduate	verb
16	전공하다	*jeon-gong-ha-da*	to major in	verb
17	결혼하다	*gyeol-hon-ha-da*	to get married	verb
18	돌아가다	*do-ra-ga-da*	to go back; to return	verb
19	어리다	*eo-ri-da*	to be young; little	adj
20	힘들다	*him-deul-da*	to be hard; tiring	adj

Korean Age and International Age (check official sources)

On 28 June 2023 South Korea made the international age system (**만 나이**, counted from birth) the standard for most legal and administrative purposes, through amendments to the Civil Act. Reports say some areas, such as the school year, still follow a separate "year age" calculation, and sources differ on exact details such as the age at primary-school entry, so check an official source like the Ministry of Education before relying on a figure. In everyday talk the old Korean age (everyone is 1 at birth and gains a year each 1 January) is still often used, especially between friends and when discussing children. People may also ask **몇 년생이에요?** ("what year were you born?") to work out

who is older, which decides who uses which speech level. For your own age, use Native Korean numbers: 스무 살 (20), 서른 살 (30), 마흔 살 (40).

The School Ladder

The usual stages are **초등학교** (primary), **중학교** (middle), **고등학교** (high school) and **대학교** (university). Years are counted with 학년: 초등학교 삼 학년 is "third grade of primary". The school year begins in March, according to sources. People often shorten the stage names to 초딩, 중딩 and 고딩 in casual talk, but those are slangy.

As Heard in Dramas — 드라마에서

Flashback scenes begin with 어렸을 때... or 그때는... ("back then..."), and a character explaining an awkward fact will say 제가 원래 그런 사람이거든요 ("I'm just that kind of person, you see"). A common surprised reaction to a life story is 인생은 알 수 없는 거예요 ("you never know in life"). Tense school reunions often mention which 몇 년생 everyone is.

Grammar Pointer

The past tense -았/었어요 is from Korean Basic Conversation 2, Chapter 9 (The Past); the future modifier -(으)ㄹ is from Chapter 4 of this course, and -기 전에 and -(으)ㄴ 후에 from Chapter 2. -(으)ㄴ 적이 있다 (Chapter 5) describes experiences, while -(으)ㄹ 때 sets the time. The connection with the "when I was little" stories continues in Chapter 12, where time spent abroad is counted with -(으)ㄴ 지 ... 됐어요.

✍️ Try It Yourself — 연습

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

1. Say "I was born in Liverpool and grew up there."

▼ Show answer

저는 리버풀에서 태어나서 거기에서 자랐어요.

2. Say "When I was little I wanted to be a teacher."

▼ Show answer

어렸을 때 선생님이 되고 싶었어요.

3. Say "I ended up coming to Korea because of work."

▼ Show answer

일 때문에 한국에 오게 됐어요.

4. Explain with -거든요: "I didn't know any Korean, you see."

▼ Show answer

한국어를 하나도 몰랐거든요.

5. Ask someone "What year were you born?" and "What did you major in?"

▼ Show answer

몇 년생이에요? 무엇을 전공했어요?

6. Tell a friend casually "When we were little we played at the playground every day, didn't we?"

▼ Show answer

우리 어렸을 때 매일 놀이터에서 놀았지?