

Learn Korean Ep. 31: "Who"

There are two ways to say "who" in Korean, depending on how it's being used. English has a similar concept – "who" and "whom." "Who" is used when we're referring to a **subject**, and "whom" is used when we're referring to an **object**.

"누가" is similar to "who," and "누구" is similar to "whom."

누가 (Subject)

Use "누가" whenever "who" is the **subject** of a sentence.

누가 했어요?

"Who did it?"

누가 집에 있어요?

"Who is at home?"

누가 밥 먹었어요?

"Who ate?"

누구 (Object)

Use "누구" whenever "who" is the **object** of a sentence ("whom"). This is essential to distinguish, because while English's use of "whom" is slowly fading away, the difference between "누구" and "누가" is still strong in Korean.

If you don't know what an object is, look at the sentence, "I kicked the ball." Here, "I" is the subject, "kicked" is the verb, and "(the) ball" is the object. **The object is what receives the action of the verb.**

누구를 만났어요?

"Who did you meet?"

The above sentence would have a completely different meaning if you used "누가" instead.

누가 만났어요?

"Who met him/her?"

Instead of talking about the person you met, this sentence is asking who did the actual meeting.

누구를 선택했어요?

"Who did you choose?"

"선택하다" means "to select" or "to choose."

In addition to being used whenever "who" ("whom") is the object, "누구" is also used in **every situation** where "who" is not a subject.

누구에게 물어봤어요? (not "누가")

"Who did you ask that to?"

누구한테서 들었어요?

"Who did you hear that from?"

누구랑 이야기했어?

"Who did you talk with?"

This sentence would be only spoken in casual situations.

Conclusion

Use "누가" to mean "who" whenever it's the subject, and use "누구" in all other situations. If you have any questions, feel free to send me a message through my web site or on YouTube. Good luck in your studies!

