

## Learn Korean Ep. 8: "To" and "from" a person

This lesson will cover how to say "to a **person**" and "from a **person**." This is different than how to say "to a *location*" and "from a *location*," which I'll explain in a later lesson. There are three ways to say "to a person," and three ways to say "from a person."

### "To" a person

"To" a person:

- 께 (extra polite)
- 에게 (normal)
- 한테 (casual)

All three of these are used directly after the person (noun) that they're referring to.

선생님께 편지를 썼습니다.

"I wrote a letter **to** the teacher."

Since I'm using "께," it shows extra politeness **toward the teacher**.

부모님께 말했어요.

"I told my parents." (Literally, "I said it to my parents.")

Although "께" shows extra politeness, it does so **only to the person you are referring to**, and not to the speaker. This is why the verb can still have regular "~요" ending – it could even end without a "요" in casual situations.

저에게 돈을 주세요.

"Please give me money." (Literally, "Please give money to me.")

나는 그에게 선물을 주었다.

"I gave him a present." (Literally, "I gave a present to him.")

내게 불가능한 일은 없다.

"Nothing is impossible to me."

"내게" is an abbreviation of "나에게."

“불가능하다” means “to be impossible.”

나한테 말해 줘.

“Tell me.” (Literally, “Tell it to me.”)

왜 자꾸 나한테 물어보는 거야?

“Why do you keep asking me?” (Literally, “Why do you keep asking it to me?”)

“자꾸” means “to keep~ (doing)” or “repeatedly,” and is an adverb.

“물어보다” means “to ask.”

In English, when using verbs such as “to ask” or “to tell,” we remove “to” when the verb comes immediately before the person we are speaking to (e.g. “I *asked him* a question” versus “I *asked* a question to *him*.”). In Korean, “to” is always added, even if the English translation does not contain it.

Since this sentence uses “나” and ends with “야,” it is casual, so “한테” fits nicely.

## “From” a person

All three of these are also used directly after the person (noun) that they’re referring to.

“From” a person:

- 께 (extra polite)
- 에게(서) (normal)
- 한테(서) (casual)

Note that “께” remains the same, and the other two are also the same, but with “서” added in parentheses. The “서” in parentheses is optional, and is only needed when necessary. Most often, the context of the sentence alone can tell the listener whether the speaker means “to” or “from.” Here’s an example to show what I mean:

그분께 드렸습니다.

“I gave it to him.”

“그분” is a polite way to say “him” or “her.”

“드리다” is a more polite way to say “주다,” “to give,” and is used when the speaker is giving something to someone he or she wishes to show extra respect to; it is also quite common.

그분께 받았습니다.

“I received it from him.”

Notice that there is no confusion that the first sentence means “to” and the second sentence means “from.” It is easy to distinguish from the context.

오랜 친구에게서 전화가 왔다.

“I got a call from an old friend.”

“오랜 친구” means “an old friend” (as in the time you’ve known him or her, not age).

“전화가 오다” means “to get a call,” but literally it means “a call comes.”

This sentence is a good example of a time when you should add the “서.” Without “서,” this sentence could mean “an old friend got a phone call” (literally, “a call came to an old friend”). **If the meaning could be vague, or if you’re not sure, then it’s best to add the “서” when you want to say “from.”**

그 얘기 누구한테 들었어?

“Who’d you hear that from?”

“얘기” is a casual abbreviation for “이야기.”

Since the verb is “듣다,” “to hear” or “to listen,” it’s clear that this sentence could only mean “from,” so the “서” is not necessary.

I’d recommend reading this lesson over again and practicing making your own sentences using what we’ve gone over, until you’re able to use “to a person” and “from a person” without difficulty. I hope this lesson was helpful. Good luck in your studies!

