

LEVEL 1 LESSON 5

After studying with this lesson, you will be able to say things like “A is B(noun).” or “I am ABC(noun).” in polite/formal Korean.

이에요 / 예요 [i-e-yo / ye-yo]

이에요 and 예요 have a similar role to that of the English verb “to be”. The fundamental difference, however, is the sentence structure that they are used in.

English sentence structure:

ABC + [be] + DEF.

** DEF is a noun here.

Ex)

ABC is DEF.

I am ABC.

You are XYZ.

Korean sentence structure:

ABC + DEF + [be]

** DEF is a noun here.

Ex)

이거 ABC 예요. [i-geo ABC-ye-yo] = This is ABC.

In English, the verb “to be” is changed to “am” “are” or “is” depending on the subject of the sentence, but in Korean, you decide whether to use 이어요 [i-e-yo] or 예요 [ye-yo] depending on whether the last letter in the previous word ended in a consonant or a vowel. 이어요 and 예요 are very similar and also sound similar so it is not such a big problem if you mix up these two, but it is better to know the correct forms.

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When you want to say that ABC “is” DEF in Korean, if the word for “DEF” has a final consonant in the last letter, you add **이에요** [i-e-yo], but if it doesn't have a final consonant and ends in a vowel, you add **예요** [ye-yo]. This is just to make the pronunciation of the connected part easier, so it will come naturally if you practice with some sample sentences.

Final consonant + **이에요** [i-e-yo]

No final consonant (Only vowel) + **예요** [ye-yo]

Sample sentences

물이에요. = 물 + 이에요 [mul + i-e-yo]

(It's) water.

가방이에요. = 가방 + 이에요 [ga-bang + i-e-yo]

(It's) a bag.

사무실이에요. = 사무실 + 이에요 [sa-mu-sil + i-e-yo]

(It's) an office.

학교예요. = 학교 + 예요 [hak-gyo + ye-yo]

(It's) a school.

저예요. = 저 + 예요 [jeo + ye-yo]

(It's) me.

As you can see from the examples above, in Korean, you don't have to use articles like “a/an” or “the” as in English. So when you look up a noun in your Korean dictionary, you can add **이에요** or **예요** and then it means “It is ABC.” “That is DEF.” “I am XYZ.” You can also make this a question simply by raising the tone at the end of the sentence.

물이에요. [mul-i-e-yo] = It's water.

물이에요? [mul-i-e-yo?] = Is that water? Is this water?

학교예요. [hak-gyo-ye-yo] = It's a school.

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학교예요? [hak-yo-ye-yo] = Is it a school? Are you at school now?

뭐 [mwo] = what

뭐예요? [mwo-ye-yo?] = What is it? What's that?