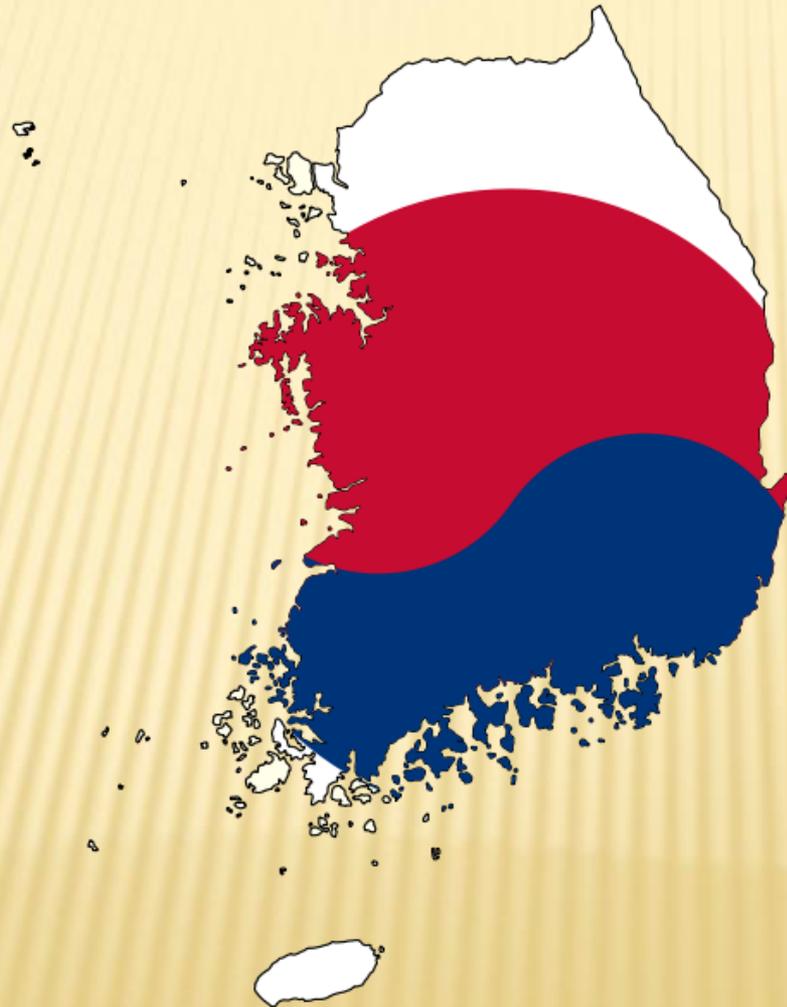


# Korean Customs and Etiquette



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# Korean Overview



Koreans are generally very interested in foreigners. Most of them will look or stare at you out of interest, not because you are disliked. So do not be self-conscious.

Just use your common sense of politeness and good manners. Always act respectfully and avoid any words or actions that could make any party appear in a negative light. And of course, it always helps to know the three basic Korean phrases:

**Hello: “Ahn-nyong-ha-say-yo.”**

**Thank You: “Gom-sah-hom-nee-da.”**

**I Love Korea: “Day-hahn-ming-gook Sah-lahng-hay-yo.”**

# AGENDA

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- ✘ Appearance & Dress
- ✘ Meeting & Greeting
- ✘ Dining Etiquette
- ✘ Gift-Giving Etiquette
- ✘ Socializing
- ✘ Cultural Differences
- ✘ Korean Food

# Hanbok

- ✘ The Korean traditional dress is called a “**Hanbok.**” (pron. w/long O)
- ✘ It is usually worn on special holidays like “**Chusok**” Korean Thanksgiving, “**Sol Nahl**” Korean New Year, special birthdays, weddings or formal banquets.
- ✘ You can buy a custom made Hanbok or rent one for a special occasion.
- ✘ Women should wear their hair pulled back in a low bun or in an updo.



# Women's Attire

- ✘ Your appearance and dress is a way of showing respect for Korean culture and customs.
- ✘ Women should dress modestly. Avoid tight fitting tops that are too low cut or revealing.
- ✘ The photos on the right show what you **should NOT wear**. Although it is acceptable in the states, it is not appropriate in Korea, especially if you have large breasts.
- ✘ Bring a sweater, scarf or wrap to cover your shoulders or to place over your lap when sitting down.



# Men's Attire



- ✘ Men should wear conservative, dark colored suits with white shirts and conservative ties.
- ✘ Men should avoid wearing too much jewelry. (Did you know many Korean men and women do not wear a wedding ring? Younger unmarried couples wear “Couple Rings”.)
- ✘ Jeans and business casual attire are not recommended for meetings or formal events.



# Men: Meet and Greet



- ✘ Wait to be introduced at a social gathering.
- ✘ The person of lower status bows to the person of higher status. The person who initiates the bow says, "**mon-nah-suh bahn-gop-sum-nee-dah**", which means "**pleased to meet you.**" Or "**cho-um bep-gae-sum-nee-dah**", which means "**I am meeting you for the first time.**"
- ✘ Korean men bow to one another when greeting and departing and it is often accompanied by a handshake.
  - + The person of higher status usually initiates the handshake.
  - + The right hand is always used to shake with, while the left hand either helps the right hand or touches the right arm near the elbow.
  - + Instead of pumping the hand of the person one is meeting, most just clasp hands momentarily while bowing slightly at the waist.
  - + Using two hands when shaking hands, giving a glass of water, or receiving something from another person shows respect.

# Women: Meet and Greet

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- ✘ Korean women usually bow and usually do not shake hands with Western men. However, Western women may offer their hand to a Korean man.
- ✘ When bowing, women should overlap your hands together in the front just below your belly button and bow at a 45degree angle.
- ✘ Since age is important in determining hierarchy, it is very common to ask someone their age shortly after meeting.
  - + When a Korean gives you their age, it is usually 1 to 2 years older than what Westerners are used to. Often people will give you the year and month they were born.
  - + In Korea, being the same age means that you are automatically “friends,” which means that terms of respect can be dropped and demeanors can be much more relaxed. But remember to wait for permission before dropping the formalities.

# Business Cards



- ✘ Business cards are exchanged after the initial introductions in a highly ritualized manner.
- ✘ The way you treat someone's business card is indicative of the way you will treat the person.
- ✘ Have one side of your business card translated into Korean if possible.
- ✘ Present your business card using both hands with the Korean side facing up so that it is readable by the recipient.
- ✘ Examine any business card you receive carefully.
- ✘ Put the business cards in a business card case or a portfolio.
- ✘ Never write on someone's business card in their presence.

# Names and Titles

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- ✘ Westerners are expected to address Koreans with Mr., Mrs., or Miss plus the family name.
  - + Wives in Korea do not take on their husband's last names.
- ✘ Korean names are in reverse order from Western names.
  - + Korean names have the family/last name first, followed by a (usually) two part given name.
  - + Example: My name is Kim Kyung Hay. Kim is my last name. Kyung Hay is my name. There is no middle name.
- ✘ **It is impolite to call Koreans by their given (first) name.**
  - + Always address a Korean using professional titles such as teacher (**son-seng-neem**), general (**jahng-goon-neem**), wife (**sah-mone-neem**), single woman (**ah-gah-she**), married woman (**ah-joom-mah**), married man (**ah-jo-she**), etc.

# Culture Clash

- ✘ Koreans consider it impolite and BOLD to make direct eye contact in conversation, and will sometimes avoid eye-contact as a sign of respect.
- ✘ Public displays of affection are highly frowned upon (includes kissing). However, holding hands is acceptable.
- ✘ Koreans do not normally touch one another in public, unless a relative or very close friend.
  - + Children are an exception to this rule. Children can be touched unexpectedly, as a sign of affection and as a complement of the child's good looks.
  - + Another exception is in crowded situations such as elevators, subway trains, buses, or standing in line. You will most likely not hear an **“excuse me” (shil-lay-hom-nee-dah)** or an **“I’m sorry” (me-ahn-hom-nee-dah)**. Pushing and crowding is commonly expected in a densely populated environment.



# DINING ETIQUETTE

- ✘ Koreans eat **communally** which means that, except for their own bowl of rice, all food is placed in separate dishes in the center of the table and everyone takes from the dishes as they eat.
- ✘ There is usually one or two main dishes consisting of a soup dish and a meat dish, with all others being smaller side dishes of all types of food.
  - + This sharing of food together means a great deal to Koreans, as they believe the sharing of food and alcohol brings people closer to one another and is often the basis for building closer personal and business relationships.



# Dining at Someone's Home



- ✘ Always **remove your shoes** when entering a Korean house. Place them neatly together.
- ✘ If possible, **wear socks or slippers** when entering the home.
- ✘ Prepare a small hostess or “Thank You” gift.
- ✘ Wait to be seated.
- ✘ The most senior person in the group is served first.
- ✘ Koreans usually use a spoon for eating rice and soups, and chopsticks for noodles or side dishes.
- ✘ Do not lift the food bowls to your mouth.
- ✘ Try a little of everything, but leave food for others.
- ✘ Be a conscious eater. Make sure everyone has gotten a chance to eat before taking seconds.

# Using Chopsticks

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- ✘ Always place **chopsticks to the right of the spoon**. Chopsticks are only laid to the left during the food preparation for funerals or memorial services.
- ✘ Do not hold your spoon and chopsticks together in the same hand.
- ✘ Do not pierce your food with chopsticks. Use a small fork or toothpick for pieces of fruit.
- ✘ Return your chopsticks to the table after every few bites and when you drink or stop to speak. Place them on the chopstick rest or on the table.
- ✘ Never leave your chopsticks in such a way that they appear to be sticking out of the bowl, as they resemble incense sticks that are lighted during funerals.

# Eating Out

- ✘ There are some Korean restaurants that require you to enter without your shoes. These restaurants usually have low tables where guests sit on the floor on cushions.
- ✘ You should be conscious of how people are seated at the dining table whether in a restaurant or home. Wait to be seated by your host.
  - + Men sit with their legs crossed (Indian style), while women sit with their legs bent to the side. It is considered rude to sit with your legs straight out.
- ✘ When you leave a social gathering, say **“It was nice meeting you” (mon-nah- suh bahn- gah- wot sum- nee- dah)** or **“I ate well” (mah-sheet-gae moh-got-sum-nee-dah)** and bow.
- ✘ The host usually accompanies guests to the gate or to their cars when they are leaving because Koreans believe it is insulting to wish your guests farewell indoors.



# Eating Out: Culture Clash



- ✘ Westerners may find that Koreans tend to make much more noises when eating, especially when eating noodles.
- ✘ Koreans tend to put a lot more food in their mouths at one time than Westerners. For example, the beef n leaf lettuce wrap.
- ✘ Do not criticize Korean cuisine. If you do not care for something, simply say **“No thank you”** or **“I’m allergic.”**
- ✘ Going **“Dutch”** is not common in Korea. One person may pay for everyone’s meal. It is considered polite to pay discretely if one has invited others to dinner.
- ✘ **Do not leave a tip**, unless you are on a US military installation or at a western hotel. Some fine dining restaurants will automatically add a gratuity to your bill.
- ✘ Blowing your nose during a meal is considered rude. If your nose is running from eating spicy foods, simply wipe. If possible, blow your nose in the bathroom.

# Drinking with Koreans

- ✘ Koreans do not usually pour their own drinks, but wait to fill their neighbors glass and the neighbor should reciprocate.
- ✘ If you are pouring a drink to an elder, always hold the bottle or container with **both hands** while pouring.
- ✘ If receiving a drink from a person, it is polite to rest the glass in the left palm and to hold it with the right hand, or to hold it with both hands, with a slight bow of the head.
- ✘ If the person who pours you an **alcoholic drink** is socially higher ranked or older than you, it is customary to hold your glass with both hands, and then **face slightly away** from that individual while consuming your alcoholic beverage.
- ✘ If a Korean says “**one shot**” when drinking socially, it is customary for all people to finish their drink in a single gulp. If the glass is not completely empty, it should not be refilled. If it is empty, it should be refilled right away. Leaving a glass empty is considered rude and impolite.



# GIFT-GIVING ETIQUETTE



- ✘ Always bring a gift for your hostess if you are invited to someone's home.
  - + Give small gifts like candy, cakes, cookies, fruit or flowers. Do not give white chrysanthemums. They are used for funerals.
- ✘ Give and receive gifts using both hands.
- ✘ Do not give someone an expensive gift if you know that they will feel uncomfortable or burdened by it.
- ✘ Wrap gifts nicely in brightly colored paper.
  - + Do not wrap gifts in green, white, or black.
- ✘ Do not sign a card or documents in red ink. The color red symbolizes death.
- ✘ Koreans do not usually open gifts in front of the gift giver unless asked to do so.

# SOCIALIZING



- ✘ Do feel comfortable discussing the following topics: sports (particularly soccer), South Korea's international achievements, the health of one's family, and personal hobbies.
- ✘ Do not be surprised if you are asked personal questions, such as your age, weight, height or salary.
- ✘ **Be modest if someone compliments you. It is considered rude to boast and brag about yourself.**
- ✘ Smoking is very common in Korea. But most women do not smoke in public.
- ✘ When exchanging phone numbers, a cell phone is called a **"Hand Pone"** in Korea.



# Cultural Differences

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- ✘ Korean people do not respond with “you’re welcome” after someone says “thank you.” Simply respond with “Ney”, which means “yes.”
- ✘ The word “please” is not used in Korea like in America. The honorific or formal version of speech is similar to saying “please.”
- ✘ When a Korean person tells you their age, they are usually one to two younger than what they have told you. You’ll have to do some math, but you can ask what month and year they were born.
- ✘ A Korean baby’s first birthday is celebrated as lavishly as a small wedding. Gold (24k) jewelry and money is given as gifts.
- ✘ Most Korean children live with their parents until they get married, and usually the oldest son, lives with the parents until their death.
- ✘ Korean weddings only last for 2 hours. There is no dancing or partying during the reception. Money is usually given as a wedding gift.
- ✘ Many Koreans are afraid of dogs. Most teach their dogs to “potty and poo” inside the house on a pee pad.

# Traditional Korean Foods

- ✘ Rice still remains the staple of most Koreans. Rice is usually accompanied by various side dishes, mostly seasoned vegetables, soup/stew and a little meat. And of course, a traditional Korean meal is not complete without kimchee. Most people know kimchee to be the fermented or pickled spicy Chinese cabbage, but there are over 110 different kinds of kimchee. Various vegetables such as radish, green onion and cucumber are also used. Certain types of kimchee are made spicy with the addition of red chili pepper powder, while others are prepared without red chili peppers or are soaked in a tasty liquid.



# Rice Dishes



**Gongge Key Bop**  
(Bowl of Rice)



**Bebimbop**  
(Rice & Veg. w/spicy red paste)



**Dol Sot Bebimbop**  
(Rice & Veg. in a hot stone pot)



**Kimbop**  
(Rice, veg., ham, fish cake wrapped in seaweed)



**Ddok Gook**  
(Rice Cake Soup)



**Ddok/ Sone Pyon**  
(Rice Cake w/sweet filling)

# Stews/Soups



**Kimchee G Gey**  
(Kimchee stew)



**Som Gey Tong**  
(Chicken & rice soup)



**Boo Day G Gey**  
(Spicy Army Stew)



**Dwen Jong G Gey**  
(Brown bean paste stew)



Red chili paste, kimchee,  
ramyon noodles, hot dogs,  
spam, rice cake, etc.

# Meats



**Fried Chicken**

(usually found at chicken and beer restaurants)



**Som Gyup Sol** (Pork w/lettuce)



**Yahng Yum Chicken**  
(Marinated chicken)



**Gahl Bee**  
(Teriyaki Beef Ribs)



**Bul Go Key**  
(Thin strips of teriyaki beef)

# Noodles



**Konge Gook Soo**  
(Cold white bean noodles)



**Jjom Bbongge**  
(Spicy Chinese noodles)



**Be Bin Neng Myun**  
(Cold spicy noodles)



**Jop Chay**  
(Stir-fried noodles w/veg.)



**Jjah Jahng Myun**  
(Black bean Chinese noodles)



**Neng Myun**  
(Cold noodles in beef broth)

# Street Foods



**Boo Chin Gay  
or Jun**  
(Korean pancakes)



**Chin Mon Doo**  
(Steamed pot stickers)



**O Deng or Ah Mook**  
(Fish Cake on a stick)



**Ddok Boke Key**  
(Spicy rice cakes)