

CHAPTER FIVE

DEFERENCE IN KOREA



What problems do Westerners have in Korea? For example, they have to decide whether using two hands is a polite gesture for everyone or a gesture of deference for an older person. In this chapter, we look at the difference between “politeness” and “deference” in East and West.

IN THIS CHAPTER, STUDENTS WILL

- 1. EXAMINE THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT POLITE BEHAVIOR AND HIERARCHY.**
- 2. LEARN ABOUT THE KEY CONCEPTS IN THE CHAPTER—*DEFERENCE, POLITENESS, AND RESPECT*.**
- 3. READ THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT WESTERNERS TRYING TO ADJUST TO KOREAN CUSTOMS.**
- 4. REREAD THE DISCUSSION AND ANSWER READING TASKS.**
- 5. TAKE THE READING COMPREHENSION TEST.**
- 6. LEARN ABOUT TERMS OF ADDRESS, POLITE SUGGESTIONS AND REQUESTS.**
- 7. ACT OUT A SITUATION REQUIRING A POLITE REQUEST.**
- 8. DO A LISTENING EXERCISE.**
- 9. DO EXERCISES ON POLITE REQUESTS, SUGGESTIONS AND RELATIVE CLAUSES.**
- 10. DO A CROSSWORD PUZZLE BASED ON THE WORDS IN THE CHAPTER.**

LET'S START WITH YOU

Rate the following statements according to this scale.

- 5—strongly agree
- 4—agree
- 3—neither agree nor disagree
- 2—disagree
- 1—strongly disagree



1. ____ The barriers and politeness levels which separate superior and subordinates should be maintained in order to preserve the social order.
2. ____ Westerners are so casual that it's okay to call an adult Westerner by his or her given name or by the family name without a title.
3. ____ Even if we are only three years apart in age, I should treat an older person differently than I treat my friends. I also expect a younger person to show respect for me.
4. ____ The Korean ways of showing respect are much too complicated for foreigners to understand.
5. ____ Westerners also have ways of showing respect. Their customs are just less visible than ours.
6. ____ Language and cultural barriers often prevent Koreans from observing Western behavior accurately.
7. ____ It is important for people from both cultures to be able to laugh together about the cultural mistakes they make.

LET'S LOOK AT KEY CONCEPTS.

Deference is the polite yielding or obedience to the opinion, wishes or judgment of another; courteous respect for rank, shown by some humbling behavior, such as bowing or lowering the eyes or voice; a show of exaggerated politeness and respect for someone of superior rank. This concept is a little old-fashioned. (neutral connotation)

The society was characterized by **deference and hierarchy**. (neutral)

Lawyers have to be **deferential** when speaking to the judge. (neutral)

Of course, I **defer** to the president's wishes although I have no respect for him. (neutral)

They observed a moment of silence **in deference to** those who died. (neutral)

The culture has **great deference for** its religious figures. (neutral)

A **hierarchy** is an arrangement of people by rank and authority. (neutral)

The U.S. military has a **stricter hierarchy** than any other American institution. (neutral or negative)

His promotion placed him **at the top of the hierarchy**. (neutral or positive)

This is a very conservative university where **a strong sense of academic hierarchy** exists; for example, the top professors seldom have lunch with the new assistant professors. (neutral)

Politeness is consideration shown by not intruding into another's space or time; using language which doesn't offend or cause hurt feelings; using respectful language regardless of rank. (neutral or positive)

I expect my children to be **polite** even to people they don't like. (neutral or positive)

At the end of their marriage, there was little courtesy or even **ordinary politeness** between them. (neutral)

They try to bring their children up with **honesty, respect for others, politeness and a sense of fair play**. (positive)

The embassy has **strict rules of politeness** and social and public relations. (neutral)

She replied **with equal politeness**. (neutral)

The little hotel offers the guests a **mixture of comfort, politeness, friendliness and helpfulness.** (positive)

Note: In Korean English, people often use the word *kind* when native speakers would use the word *polite* or *helpful*, for example, to refer to the behavior of a shopkeeper waiting on a customer. Someone who is *kind* is good, generous, helpful and caring about others; the word is often used for someone's behavior to the unfortunate or those less able to help themselves, for example, "It was very kind of you to bring me some chicken soup when I had a cold." A common slogan is, "Be kind to animals." American children are taught to take proper care of their dogs and cats—giving them good dog food or cat food, always having fresh water out for them, letting them get plenty of exercise, and giving them lots of affection.

Respect is attention paid to someone by listening and observing carefully; care taken not to step over personal boundaries; sincere good feelings for someone. (positive or neutral)

His friends **showed an enormous amount of respect for** him. (positive)

These little criminals obviously have **no respect for** the law. (negative)

Let's **respect** them, but not copy them too much. (neutral)

The children were taught to **treat everyone with respect.** (positive)

His honesty and hard work **won him the respect** of his colleagues. (positive)

Their relationship was based on **mutual respect.** (positive)

Exercise 1: Which picture best illustrates the term *deference*, *politeness* or *respect*? Write the term in the space provided.



May I help you with that?



Yes, sir. Of course, sir. Right away, sir.

Picture 1 _____

Picture 2 _____



You're our best employee. Well done!

Picture 3 _____

Exercise 2: Put a check (✓) under the word on the right that matches the definition or description on the left.

	deference (behavior)	politeness (behavior)	respect (thought)
bow deeply to another			
acknowledge another's presence			
use very formal language			
use appropriate language			
stand in line to wait your turn			
avoid interrupting conversations			
keep your voice/music low			
give sufficient notice for invitations or deadlines			
listen attentively			
obey the requests of higher rank			
avoid sensitive topics			
make an outward show			
perhaps keep feelings to yourself			
react to rank/position			
avoid stepping over boundaries			
feel another's opinions are important			

Your **values** are the principles which control your behavior. These principles show what you **value**, that is, what you believe to be important. (neutral or positive)

She believes strongly in the **basic values**, like courage, loyalty and honesty. (neutral or positive)

Your life should be guided by **moral and human values**, not by a desire to make money. (neutral or positive)

LET'S TEST OURSELVES.

Without looking at the previous sections, fill in the blanks:

1. In a crowded restaurant, the math department faculty is having dinner and discussing their plans for the semester. Then a new Asian student in the department comes to their table and interrupts the conversation in order to bow and introduce himself. By

American standards, the student is being _____ but not _____.

2. Americans show _____ for other people at the workplace by giving them enough notice (time) for invitations. You might ask someone to lunch for two or three weeks in advance, not for the next day.

LET'S JOIN THE ROUNDTABLE.

Reading task:

1. Look at the way Anne introduces Klaus and Byong-ok. Can you guess who is shown more respect?

Informal introductions

“Klaus! Over here!” Anne calls. As he approaches, she says, “Have a seat.”

The middle-aged German sets his cup of coffee on the table. Since he is still standing, Anne hops up to introduce him to Byong-ok, who rises as well.

“Klaus, I’d like you to meet Byong-ok.” Then she turns to Byong-ok. “This is my friend Klaus, who came to Seoul a few months ago to take over a German company here. Byong-ok is the company president I thought you’d like to meet.”

“Mueller,” Klaus says, giving his last name as he bows and shakes hands with Byong-ok. Then he turns to greet Frank and Tom.

Reading task:

2. Which does Klaus prefer—discussion or deference? Why?

Being king

“So,” Byong-ok says with a grin when everyone is seated again. “How do you like being at the head of a company here?”

“I think things are going well enough now, but it was a shock at first.”

“How do you mean?” Anne asks.

“When I was still in Germany, I was told that in Korea I would be treated like a king, although the same people would be rather impolite to their subordinates. When I arrived, I found that it was much more extreme than I had expected. People follow me, but not even the senior director discusses a decision with me or expresses his doubts or objections.”

“Not exactly European management style, eh?” Byong-ok says, still smiling sympathetically.

“No, and I miss the discussion we had in Europe. There seems to be no one with whom I can go over policies. Whatever I say is just handed down like an order.”

Byong-ok shrugs. “I guess it’s lonely at the top everywhere, but I know that’s more true here than in the West.”

Reading task:

3. Generally Klaus prefers to run a company according to the social mores of the country. Did he do it this time?
4. What influenced his decision?

Bringing in Western ways

Klaus nods. “Of course, management principles have to be determined by the country and the people. Two quite different companies can be run the same way in Korea, but in Pakistan or Germany a company would have to be run much differently.”

“So, King Klaus,” Anne says jokingly, “How are you coping?”

“Well, for a long time before I arrived, the company had been losing money. I was given only one year to turn it around. I knew that I had to find out what was going on and that people would never tell me if I sat in my glass cage. So I went to them, which at first shocked them. A few pointed out that it was not the Korean way for the president of the company to come to the desks of his subordinates. But I said, ‘I’m not Korean, and we are a German company, so I want to do it my way.’”

“Did it work?”

“I think so. People discovered that they had to tell me the truth because I was right there and I wanted to see the figures they had. They also discovered that I would be fair. We learned to work together. My staff is made up of well-educated, hard-working people, and together we seem to have turned the business around.”

“You’ve stopped losing money already?”

“Next quarter we may even make a profit.”

“Congratulations,” comes from Tom and Byoung-ok.

Reading task:

5. When do many Western adults dislike being called by their first names?
6. Even after thirty years in Korea, Frank still has trouble with one aspect of Korean culture. What is it?
7. Why do you think this is still a problem for him?

Language levels

Klaus turns to Frank. “As a college professor in a Confucian society, how do you find yourself behaving?”

“It’s very complicated,” Frank says. “You know about the language levels, several levels of politeness and formality marked by verb endings and so on.”

“More from reading than from experience,” Klaus admits. “Of course, just like in German with the polite word for ‘you’ and the familiar word for ‘you,’ it’s better to be too polite than not polite enough.”

Anne shrugs. “Well, sure, that’s even true in the U.S. A lot of adults don’t like being called by their first names, particularly by a younger person or someone they don’t know. You have to wait until the person says ‘please call me Anne.’”



Inside an intercultural family

Frank continues. “Sure. In the U.S., names with or without titles are used to show levels of respect. In a typical family, the children are called by their first names, and the parents are called Mom and Dad, although in some families the children call their parents by their first names as a sign that they’re all equal.”

“I’ve never liked that,” Klaus interjects.

“But in Korea the use of different language levels even occurs within a family. My wife is Korean, and I can tell you I’ve often embarrassed myself.”

Anne smiles, “For example?”

“When my father-in-law first came to my house, I was so nervous that in five minutes I was speaking down to him and up to my wife, when I was supposed to speak down to my wife and up to him. Even now—I got a phone call recently from my brother-in-law, who’s twenty years younger than I am. Without thinking, I was saying *ne, ne*. When I hung up, my wife said, ‘You were talking to my father?’ I said, ‘No, your brother.’ I didn’t understand what she meant. ‘Then what were you saying *ne* for?’ I should have been saying, ‘unh, unh.’ *Ne* was too deferential.”

“Do you think you’ll ever get used to it?” Anne asks.

“I can try. That’s part of living in another culture. You continue to learn things little by little.”

Byoung-ok nods at Frank. “That was my experience when I was abroad as well—it’s part of the fun.”

“What about Lori,” Anne asks Frank. “Does she use children’s language when she speaks Korean?”

“No, it’s funny. I am probably Koreanized in some ways, but it’s really strange how quickly little kids see how American I am.” He turns to Klaus. “Korean has a special kind of language for kids, but Korean kids realize immediately that’s not going to work with me. My daughter doesn’t use that language. She uses very abrupt, familiar Korean with me, with none of the polite verb endings. A Korean kid her age would be expected to use the more polite forms when speaking to her father.”

“How do people react to that?”

“Once I heard the cleaning lady correct her and say, ‘Don’t talk to your father that way.’ Lori said to the *ajumma*, because she has been through this so many times, ‘That polite language is not necessary, *Ajumma*, because in America they don’t even have that polite business.’ The *ajumma* was speechless. All she could say was, ‘Then America must be a bad country.’”

A smile goes around the round table. “Well, that’s ethnocentrism* for you,” Byoung-ok says.

“Yes, but we all react that way sometimes,” Anne says.

Reading task:

8. What happened when Frank assumed that nonverbal and verbal behavior was equally informal?
9. What was the problem when Frank tried to honor his father-in-law?

* Ethnocentrism is the belief that the people of your own ethnic group, race or nationality are better than other people.

One hand or two?

“Isn’t there a whole nonverbal system for showing deference?” Klaus asks.

“Sure,” Tom replies. “Koreans use two hands to give or accept something from someone who’s older—either two hands taking it or one hand touching the arm that’s taking it. The right hand always gives or takes something. I overdo it sometimes.”

“What are some other cultural mistakes you made when you came here, Frank? By the way, when was that?”

“1966. I was among the first of the Peace Corps volunteers. Let’s see, shortly after I arrived, I was teaching in a high school, and the teachers went on a school picnic. I was pouring beer for another teacher, a guy two years younger than me.”

He explains to Klaus, “You never pour for yourself, just for each other.”

“Hmm.”

“I was using two hands. He was a little drunk, and he shoved my left hand out of the way. ‘No, no, don’t. You’re my older brother. I’m your younger brother. Why are you using two hands? Use one hand.’ So I used one hand. But then I took the informality too far. A couple of days later when I was leaving the teachers’ room, he asked me, ‘Are you leaving early?’ I spoke without the polite form, down to him. ‘Yeah, I’m leaving.’ He answered back rudely, ‘Oh, you are?’ He was clearly insulted that I had dared to speak down to him like that. I walked out of there really hurt and puzzled. First this guy tells me to use one hand, and then he gets insulted when I use familiar language with him. Later I asked a couple of Koreans. One said, ‘He’s just a strange guy. Things are tough for you foreigners, aren’t they?’ The other said, ‘Of course it’s different. Using one hand, since you’re older than he is, makes sense. But you wouldn’t dare use familiar language. He’s a fellow teacher.’”

Anne nods. “That makes sense to me, but I can’t explain why.”

“So you have to be making decisions on how to act all the time.” Klaus says, squirming a bit uncomfortably.

Frank nods at him. “That’s right, although I made some mistakes that were just plain stupid. The second time I met my wife’s relatives, I took them to the officer’s club on post. I had a beard and long hair, but I could speak a little Korean, I was a teacher, I’d gone to Harvard, and I could eat *kimchi*. So their feelings were sort of neutral about me. My father-in-law ordered a beer, and so did I. I shouldn’t have drunk alcohol in front of my father-in-law. If I did it anyway, I should have done it in as low-key a way as possible. According to the rules, if you drink with someone who’s older than you are, you put your glass out of sight. You’re supposed to make a show of turning your back to take a sip, keeping your head low and drinking quickly. All of that would be adding to the ‘face’ of the situation. But I didn’t know. I was sitting there with my father-in-law and the other relatives, and I lifted my beer glass and proposed a toast* to my father-in-law. Everyone else at the table was horrified. That was the stupidest thing I could possibly have done.”

Byoung-ok laughs. “That’s really funny, Frank, and the funniest part is that you really have a lot of respect for your father-in-law.”

Frank continues, “As long as you follow the rules, you can drink in situations where you can’t smoke. When I was in the Peace Corps, I lived with a Korean family. The son put the ashtray under the table when his father walked up the stairs. The room would be filled with

* A toast is a short speech made as glasses are raised to a person and wine (or another drink) is drunk in his or her honor.

smoke, and smoke would be rising from under the table. Obviously, the kid wasn't hiding anything. You just don't smoke in front of older people."

Lessons in Confucian ways

Reading task:

10. What did Tom receive in return for learning the deep bow?

Klaus turns to Tom. "What was your early experience with this sort of thing?"

Tom thinks for a moment. "I've always liked the traditional Korean ways. When I came here in 1972, I was very lucky to find a Yonsei professor who told me, 'If you really want to learn Korean ways, come here two hours early every day and I'll teach you the way my grandfather taught me.' That meant with a stick in the pure traditional Confucian way. He was just like a father to me. He taught me exactly how to act, which is probably why I'm so comfortable doing it. He worked over and over teaching me to bow in the traditional way (*chöl hada*). It took three full days."

"How is it done?" Klaus asks.

Tom looks around. "I can't show you in this coffee house. Too many people would just laugh."

Anne smiles. "A verbal description will do, Tom."

"Right. Well, when you do the deep bow, you face the person, look down at the ground, and very slowly bend your knees. First one knee touches the ground, then the other, all very slowly, rhythmically, all the movements together in the same rhythm. Then bow very slowly from the waist, bending your head forward all the way down to the ground. Your hands form a triangular shape in front of your forehead, and when you reach the ground your nose fits into the space formed by your hands and thumbs."

"Very similar to the Buddhist bow."

"Right. People used to bow right on the street. Now, in order to save their clothes, in public places people just stand and bow from the waist with the hands at the sides. This is just sort of a half bow. Inside their houses, most Koreans still have the *ondol* floor, which you can sit or bow on. If I were coming to visit my friend's parents, I would say, 'Please accept my bow, my greeting.' They would sit down, and I would face them and give the bow. If you make a good first impression this way, it opens all doors. Immediately you're accepted, and that makes you more comfortable, you learn more, you adapt better, and you fit in. Bowing correctly is the mark of a good upbringing. So it helped a lot."



Reading task:

11. What stages of culture shock does Tom describe?
12. What happened to Tom at each stage?
13. What does he feel now?

Trying to assimilate

“So you really got into traditional thinking in a big way right from the beginning,” Anne says with admiration.

“It’s odd,” Tom muses. “I still went through all of the stages of culture shock. When I first came to Korea, I started learning things, but it was still a sort of Never-never Land.* When I began to take Korea seriously, things got harder. I started really wanting to fit in. Around the time I started working in my current company, I went through a phase when I didn’t want to have anything to do with foreigners or to speak English. Whatever they did in Korea, I thought was right. I even accepted the Korean view of what they call the ‘dirty’ aspects of Western culture and the view that Western society is ‘egotistical,’ a continuous, morally sloppy ‘me generation.’”

“No prejudice there,” Klaus comments.

“Well, Koreans don’t get a lot of images of Mother Theresa helping people, but they do get a lot of images of Hollywood stars on drugs.” He pauses. “Now, my work sometimes involved having to meet Western businessmen and helping them to set up appointments with Korean companies. I found myself disliking them and their stupid questions. Anyway, I got on well in the office, and I got promoted. Actually, I became a total ass. Even to the lowliest people in the office, I was being deferential. I found out later that people were laughing behind my back.”

Anne smiles at Tom. “Why don’t you tell that story about your student who went to Australia?”

The eye-opener

Tom grins at Anne. “You want me to show everyone what an idiot I can be.”

“This must be a good story,” Klaus says.

“I was asked to teach English to the daughter of someone in the company. I was invited to dinner at the house of this very respectable Korean family to meet the parents and the daughter. I carefully followed every Korean custom. At the dinner table I sat next to the guy who introduced me and not too close to the daughter. I spoke very little because everyone but the daughter was senior to me, and as a ‘junior,’ I was supposed to keep silent unless I was spoken to. In speaking, I threw in all the honorifics.”

Anne giggles. Then she explains to Klaus, “Honorifics are special verbs which are supposed to be more polite, or extra syllables, like *shi-* added to verbs. So if you are asking someone if they’re doing something, the verb changes from *hamnikka* to *hashimnikka*.”

Tom nods at her and continues. “While I was teaching her, the daughter was a shy Korean girl who did all the right things. She carried my bag, and she’d always call me ‘teacher’— ‘Oh we’re going to eat now, Teacher.’ I thought she saw me as this Western guy who’d been around a bit. After about six months, her parents sent her off to study in Australia, and she came back a different person. She was probably Westernized just like I was Koreanized.

* Never-Never Land is the magical place the children and Lost Boys go to in *PeterPan*.

She laughed at me. She was nineteen, and I was twenty-five, and in Korea you don't talk down to your 'seniors.' She said, 'God, Tom, you were so funny the first time you came to our house! You were just like a little Korean boy!'"

"That's brutal," Frank laughs sympathetically.

"That was one of the things that set me thinking about what I was doing. I was really overdoing it."

Anne nods at Tom. "You were trying very hard to be Korean, and you're just not."

Korean values

Klaus says, "Did you learn a lot about the culture?"

Tom looks thoughtful. "I don't think I had much appreciation for how deep the cultural differences were. For example, Korean children, even when they're in their middle age and beyond, will defer to their parents' authority and will want to please their parents. In the Korean family I lived with, the son could accept the fact that his parents might choose the woman he would marry. I thought that was too much. I couldn't see how someone could live like that. Now I think Koreans have a good understanding of how to live fairly happily. Although there is a great respect for education in Korea, there is still suspicion of city life, suspicion of people who don't know their station or where they're coming from. Koreans place a lot of importance on healthy, traditional conservative values. Maybe it's the Irish-American inside me which says those values are pretty good at tying a society together—like hard work and respect for other people, which I certainly had to learn when I was young."

Reading task:

14. Where does a Korean need to be careful in judging American culture? Why?

Is it just form?

"That's right," Anne adds. "People in the U.S. ask me why I've been in Korea so long, and I usually say I like to live in a place where people bow a lot."

Klaus nods at her. "You like the deference you get as a professor."

"The forms of deference are nice," Anne admits, "but usually I find that there really is genuine respect behind the bows. Most of my students really want what I have to give them. We respect each other."

"The only thing I don't like is that people assume there's little respect in the West because we're more casual," Tom says.

"Like Frank's *ajumma*," Klaus interjects.

"You are a good listener," Anne says to Klaus. "Well, the type of hierarchy is different. People can be very casual. Often Koreans get more casual than the Americans—in things like using people's first names without permission—or talking to each other in class when they should be listening to the professor. Also, if television is your primary source of information, what are you going to see? Children being disrespectful to their parents. It's part of the humor. It's comedy."

"But some of it's true," Frank says. "I mean, look at us. We've been in Korea for a long time because we like living here. Korean values have created a really nice place to live, and that's why we're here."

“Well, I sure hope so,” Anne says. “I would hate to think I’m really here because I couldn’t get a job anywhere else.”

LET’S TEST OURSELVES.

1. **Before Klaus came to Korea, he expected to be treated like**
 - a. a king, but he found it was more extreme than he expected.
 - b. a foreigner, but he found he was treated like an alien from outer space.
 - c. an expert, but he found he was treated like a know-nothing.
 - d. all of the above

2. **As the president of the company, Klaus shocked his subordinates by**
 - a. asking for their opinions and advice.
 - b. going to their desks and asking for information.
 - c. announcing that a third of them would be dismissed to save money.
 - d. all of the above.

3. **Anne compares Korean politeness levels to**
 - a. rank in the military.
 - b. words for “you” in French and Italian.
 - c. use of first names in English.
 - d. all of the above.

4. **Frank talks about politeness forms in his family with a story about**
 - a. his wife and the repairman.
 - b. his son and the piano teacher.
 - c. his daughter and the *ajumma*.
 - d. all of the above.

5. **In 1966, when Frank was a high school teacher in the Peace Corps, he unintentionally offended another teacher by confusing**
 - a. verbal and nonverbal informality.
 - b. the use of family names and given names.
 - c. “*sōnsaeng-nim*” and “*ajōssi*” as forms of address.
 - d. all of the above.

6. **Tom says his mentor opened doors for him by teaching him how to**
 - a. use chopsticks correctly.
 - b. speak Korean with the proper accent.
 - c. do the deep bow.
 - d. all of the above.

7. **Tom's pro-Korean, anti-Western phase can be explained as part of**
 - a. learning Korean Buddhism.
 - b. political education.
 - c. culture shock.
 - d. all of the above.

8. **Tom began to question what he was doing after**
 - a. he had an argument at work.
 - b. he had a fight with his Korean girlfriend.
 - c. a student laughed at him.
 - d. all of the above.

9. **The people at the round table agree that in general Koreans**
 - a. know how to live fairly happily.
 - b. have good, conservative values.
 - c. have created a nice place to live.
 - d. all of the above.

10. **You are a manager in a Korean company which is connected with an American firm. You are meeting your American counterpart, Michael Rizak, for the first time. You should speak to him as**
 - a. Manager Rizak.
 - b. Mr. Rizak.
 - c. Michael.
 - d. Rizak.
 - e. Michael Rizak.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT.

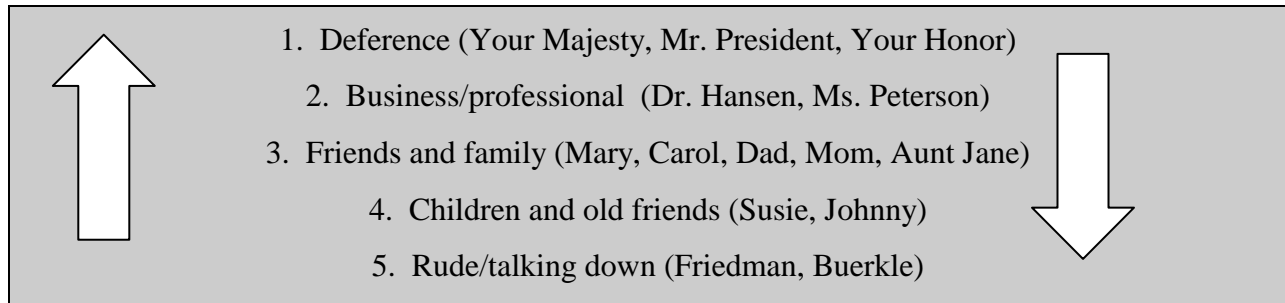
1. As Korea hurries to modernize and fit into the global village, do you think you are in danger of losing an important part of your values and traditions? Explain.
2. Imagine that you work in Klaus's company. What would you feel if the new president came sit beside you at your desk? Explain.
3. How is language used to show respect in your family? How are non-verbal signs of respect used? Explain.
4. How would you have reacted if you were the Korean teacher in Frank's story?
5. Explain the *sŏnbae-hubae* relationship. Do you think it's a good thing or not?



to

6. When do you do the deep bow for someone? Do you think such practices are still an important part of Korean life?
7. What do you think you would have felt if you had met Tom when he was trying so hard to be Korean?
8. What are your feelings when you meet a Korean who tries to be a Westerner?

LET'S LOOK AT AMERICAN TERMS OF ADDRESS.



1. Title only (usually a sign of respect and capitalized when used as a name):
 - a. A reporter speaks to the President of the United States as “Mr. President” or an ambassador to a foreign country as “Madame Ambassador.”
 - b. A lawyer in court addresses the judge as “Your Honor.”
 - c. A patient calls the doctor “Doctor.”
 - d. A Catholic calls a priest “Father” and a nun “Sister.”
 - e. A soldier calls the sergeant “Sergeant.”
 - f. An elementary student calls the teacher “Teacher.”
 - g. A restaurant customer addresses the server as “Waiter” or “Miss.” (Avoid using “Miss” except for a waitress or a clerk in a shop, and even then avoid a commanding tone of voice. “Excuse me” is more polite. Australian school children call their teachers “Miss,” but in North America this would be considered rude, like calling a Korean teacher “*Agassi*.”)
 - h. “Sir” can be used with men you don’t know and “ma’am” with women you don’t know. The title can also be used to show extra politeness to people you do know. Soldiers must use this form of address with officers. Nowadays when used alone the title isn’t capitalized except at the beginning of a sentence.
2. Title plus last name (usually the form of address for adults you don’t know well):
 - a. An adult calls a colleague or co-worker “Mr./Ms. Smith,” particularly if the person is considerably older than s/he is.
 - b. A boss or superior at work is called “Mr./Ms. Smith,” “Sgt. Smith,” “Rev. Jones.”
 - c. A university student calls the professor “Prof. Smith” or “Dr. Smith.” High school, middle school and elementary students call the teacher “Mr./Ms. Smith.”

- d. A university student may be called “Mr./Ms. Jones” by the professor.
 - e. A business calls a customer “Mr./Ms. Smith.”
 - f. A housewife calls her cleaner lady “Ms. Jones.”
3. First names (if mutual, this is an indication of equality):
- a. People who work together may call each other “Elaine” and “Walter,” even if they don’t know each other well or even like each other.
 - b. Friends, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters call each other “Carol,” “Mary,” “Frank” and “George.”
 - c. If the boss calls his secretary “Sally” when she calls him “Mr. Richards,” he is talking down to her, and she is talking up to him. Nowadays, he may suggest that they both use first names, or she may object to the unequal terms of address.
 - d. Elementary through high school students (sometimes college students) are called “David,” “Paul” or “Susan” by their teachers.
 - e. Children call older relatives and family friends “Aunt Jane” or “Uncle John.”
4. Nicknames (appropriate with people you already know very well):
- a. Relatives and good friends may use “Susie,” “Bob” or “Ed,” particularly for young children.
 - b. Common nicknames like “Bob” and “Steve” may be used at work as if they were first names.
5. Last name only (too familiar for most situations):
- a. An army drill sergeant may call a private “Smith” before giving him or her an order. In all other situations, military people have to be more polite.
 - b. Buddies, usually young men and boys, may call each other by their last names, perhaps in imitation of the drill sergeant.
6. First name with title (no longer used):
- The first name with “Miss,” “Miz,” “Mister,” or “Master” was a form of address once used by black slaves or servants when addressing the people in the family they served. Nowadays it is no longer used—except to indicate such a relationship, as in the movie, *Driving Miss Daisy*, which portrayed the relationship of an old, unmarried Southern woman and her black driver.
7. Full name:
- a. The whole name is used at ceremonies like graduation where awards are being presented and names might otherwise be confused.
 - b. Children learn at an early age that when their parents call them by their full name it’s a sign they’re in trouble. “Mary Louise Smith, come here!”

Exercise: Circle the letter in front of the best answer.

1. **On the first day of class at a language institute, your teacher introduces herself as Anne Smith, without mentioning what you should call her. After class you want to ask her a question. You should address her as**
 - a. Anne Smith.
 - b. Anne.
 - c. Miss.
 - d. Miss Smith.
 - e. Mrs. Smith.
 - f. Ms. Smith.
 - g. Smith.
 - h. Teacher.

2. **In the West, calling someone by a family name without a title will often be considered**
 - a. a friendly form of address.
 - b. an insult.
 - c. common among equals.
 - d. somewhat strange.

3. **You are doing some shopping in a store and you see your English teacher with her boyfriend. You politely say to her, “Hello, sir.” Both the teacher and the boyfriend laugh. You later learn that**
 - a. “sir” is used only in addressing men.
 - b. you don’t have to be polite to your teacher outside the classroom.
 - c. you should have addressed the boyfriend too.
 - d. you should have used your teacher’s name with a title.

4. **When you call your boss, the secretary answers with “Susan Kellermann speaking.” This means she wants you to**
 - a. call her “Kellerman.”
 - b. call her “Ms. Kellerman.”
 - c. call her “Susan.”

5. **Your Western counterpart at work seems to be only two or three years older than you are. Since you’ll be working with him or her a lot, you want to be on friendly terms. You feel you should**
 - a. start out by calling her/him by the first name.
 - b. suggest going out together so you can get to know each other.
 - c. suggest that both of you address each other with your given names.
 - d. wait until s/he suggests using given names.

6. **You have been sent to the West for training. You notice that everyone in the office seems to use first names. One morning, you are looking for Donald Boswell. When you ask Steve where Don is, your colleague says, “Don? Oh, you mean Donald.” This means**
 - a. Donald doesn’t want to be called by a nickname, so people don’t.
 - b. never use nicknames at work.
 - c. your colleagues expect you, as an Asian, to be more formal.

7. **At work, you hear people talking about your boss, Mr. Dougherty, and referring to him simply as “Dougherty.” The next time you see him, you address him as “Dougherty.” Everyone looks shocked. Someone later explains to you that**
 - a. there’s a difference between the way you address someone and the way people may (not too politely) talk about him.
 - b. when the boss wants you to use his first name, he’ll tell you.
 - c. you don’t know the boss well enough to call him that.

LET’S LOOK AT POLITE SUGGESTIONS AND REQUESTS.

Imagine a mother washing windows. She says to her five-year-old daughter, “Sally, would you please bring me some paper towels?” This is an example of a mother using polite language to a small child, namely with the use of the question form, the modal “would” and “please.” This is standard usage.

As language learners, you need to know how to be polite without being so deferential that people either laugh or think you are being sarcastic. When you need to add extra politeness, you should use additional modification showing hesitation or deference, like “I wonder if,” “would it be possible,” “when you have a minute,” “for a moment,” “do you suppose,” “I would really appreciate it if,” “I understand you’re very busy, but...”

Example: Dr. Kim, I understand you’re very busy, but would it be possible to move the meeting to 3:30? I would really appreciate it.

Under certain circumstances, polite forms can be omitted or reduced—if you are speaking informally and when the context of politeness has already been established.

“Have to,” “want to,” “be supposed to” sound very demanding. “You’d better” is the language of warnings and threats.

Example: Do you have that letter done? I have to have it by tomorrow.

Example: (One little boy to another) You’d better shut up or I’ll hit you.

“Do/would you mind” can sound sarcastic when you’re asking someone to do something. They should be avoided.

Example: *Would you mind* not talking on your cell phone during the movie, please?

- The use of bare imperatives is very restricted—for use in directions, and in speech when talking to a naughty child or in a situation where appropriate politeness has already been established.

Example: “Go to your room. Right now!”

Example: “Go down the hill, turn left at the first intersection and drive pass the gas station. It’s the first house on your right.”

Example: “Today we’re speaking with Dr. Robert Holland, who has kindly agreed to discuss his book, *How to be Polite in English*. So, Dr. Holland, tell us about the experiments you did with Asian speakers of English.”

- When making suggestions, it is often appropriate to be indirect. You want to avoid giving the impression that the other person is an idiot.

Exercise 1: Circle the letter in front of the best answer. You should use suitable language—not rude, not too deferential.

1. **You are at a restaurant having dinner with your boss. Your coffee cup is empty. As the waiter walks close by your table, you**
 - a. make eye contact and point at your cup.
 - b. say, “I need some more coffee, waiter.”
 - c. say, “May I have some more coffee, please?”
 - d. say, “Would it be possible to have some more coffee, please?”
2. **Your new Western colleague has just opened an email attachment. The anti-virus program tells her there’s a computer virus on it. She doesn’t understand that she’s supposed to type *S* (for stop). She keeps trying to click on the stop on her screen, and then she turns the machine off. You say**
 - a. “May I make a suggestion?”
 - b. “Turn the machine on and then type *S* when the anti-virus warning comes up.”
 - c. “Why did you do that?”
 - d. “You’d better just type *S*.”

3. **Your club is having a speech contest, and you need judges to work for about three hours on Saturday afternoon. You go to the office of a professor in the English Department and say,**
 - a. “Dr. Holmes, we know you’re very busy, but we would really appreciate it if you would judge our speech contest.”
 - b. “Prof. Kim said you might help us with the speech contest.”
 - c. “We need judges for our speech contest.”
 - d. “Will you help us, please?”

4. **On your first night in Canada, you are having dinner with your host family. You want the butter. You say,**
 - a. “I want the butter.”
 - b. “If it wouldn’t be too much trouble, would you pass me the butter, please?”
 - c. “Pass the butter, will you?”
 - d. “Would you pass the butter, please?”

5. **You are in a bar with Canadian friends that you feel very close to. You are sharing a pitcher of beer. You say,**
 - e. “I want the pitcher.”
 - f. “If it wouldn’t be too much trouble, would you pass me the pitcher, please?”
 - g. “Pass the pitcher, will you?”
 - h. “Hey, man, can’t you see I need more beer?”

6. **You are having dinner at the home of your American boss. You would like some more chicken, and the boss’s wife offers you some. You say,**
 - a. “I would really appreciate it. This chicken was prepared with loving hands.”
 - b. “No, thank you,” and wait for her to ask again.
 - c. “Yes, please. It’s delicious.”

7. **You are trying to find a job with a Western company, and you want someone to correct an application letter you have written. You go to an English institute, find a teacher, and say,**
 - a. “Can you correct this, please?”
 - b. “Do you know anyone who would be willing to correct this for me? I would be happy to pay for the service, of course.”
 - c. “I need to have this corrected today. I can pay 20,000 won.”
 - d. “Please correct this for me.”

8. **You are teaching Korean to a ten-year-old Korean-American. You need another magic marker for your little whiteboard. You say,**
 - a. “Michael, bring me a magic marker.”
 - b. “Michael, could you get me a magic marker from the cupboard, please?”
 - c. “Michael, when you have a minute, would you please bring me a magic marker?”

- 9. You are teaching your girlfriend/boyfriend how to use chopsticks. You say,**
- “Look, do this now.”
 - “Pick up the chopsticks and hold them like this.”
 - “Please, will you pick up the chopsticks and hold them in your hand like this?”
 - “This is the way I hold the chopsticks, if you don’t mind imitating me.”
- 10. In the subway station, you see two Westerners looking at the map. You go up to them and ask,**
- “Do you mind telling me where you’re going?”
 - “I’d very much appreciate a chance to help you find your destination.”
 - “May I help you find something?”
 - “Where are you going?”

Exercise 2: With each item, circle the letter which best describes the language used.

Use this scale: a—very polite; deferential
 b—businesslike
 c—ordinary friendly language
 d—terms of address showing inequality.
 e—childish
 f—rude

- a b c d e f Do we have any homework, Teacher?
- a b c d e f (After not hearing/understanding something) What?
- a b c d e f I very much appreciate being given the extra time, Your Honor.
- a b c d e f A: Ms. Smith, I’m afraid I need to ask you a few questions about the car you reported stolen.
 B: Of course, Lieutenant. What would you like to know?
- a b c d e f May I make a suggestion?
- a b c d e f A: Charlie, hand me that folder, would you?
 B: Sure, Frank.
- a b c d e f Please, I wonder if you could possibly do me a favor?
- a b c d e f Dussere, wait a minute!
- a b c d e f I want some more coffee, Miss.
- a b c d e f A: Sally, could you bring me that Microsoft file, please?
 B: Right away, Mr. Katz.
- a b c d e f OK, class. Please open your books to page ten.
- a b c d e f You deleted your paper? Why did you do that?

13. a b c d e f Mr. Rainer, could I see you in my office, please?
14. a b c d e f Dr. Guinn, do you have a moment? I have a question I'd like to ask
15. a b c d e f Please answer my letter immediately.

Exercise 3: Rewrite each of the following items to make it polite. Use a modal (will/would, can/could, may/might), add a subject and polite expressions. Introduce suggestions with the question, "May I make a suggestion?" Add additional information to indicate why you want something done. Avoid asking questions which might make the listener feel stupid or incompetent.

Example: Come here! → Would you come here for a moment, please? → When you have a moment, I wonder if you would take a look at this, please?

1. Waiter, I want some more coffee.

2. What do you want? (to a customer)

3. Try cleaning the diskette.

4. Aunt Harriet, I want to go to the movies.

5. Dr. Smith, why are you doing it that way?

6. Do you want to stay for dinner?

7. Don't try to see the boss now. He's very irritable this morning.

8. Pass the butter.

9. We need a judge for the English speech contest, Dr. Kim.

10. Call me when you get home.

LET'S ACT IT OUT.

Asking politely

A: You are a graduating senior. You want to ask your professor to write a letter of recommendation for you.

B: You are the professor. You are a little distant, but you don't mind writing a letter for a good student who is also respectful and polite.

C: You are another student with the same request.

LET'S LISTEN.

Asking for a letter of recommendation. The student has checked the professor's office hours and come to see him during that time. She knocks on the door and waits for the professor to either open the door or call that she should come in. The professor opens the door.

1. The first time the dialogue is played, do not look at your book. Just listen and try to pick up the main idea of the dialogue.
2. Before the dialogue is played a second time, read over these questions.
 - a. What happened before Dr. Todd first spoke to the student?
 - b. How does the student address the professor?
 - c. What politeness markers does the student use when mentioning that she'd like the professor to do her a favor?
 - d. Does the professor say he'll do it?
 - e. How much time do you think the professor has to write the letter? How do you think the professor would react if the student said she needed the letter tomorrow?
 - f. Why does the professor want to see the student's transcripts?
3. Listen to the dialogue a second time. Then discuss the answers to the questions with your partner.
4. Listen a third time. Be prepared to discuss the answers with the class.

LET'S LOOK AT RELATIVE CLAUSES.

What we can learn from this chapter

One of the characteristics of subject-verb-object languages is use of phrases to modify a preceding noun phrase or clause. In English there are different types of relative clauses. For example, in this chapter we see the following:

The barriers and politeness levels **which separate superior and subordinates** should be maintained in order to preserve the social order. (no comma or pause before “which”)

Anne hops up to introduce him to Byong-ok, **who rises as well**.

So I went to them, **which at first shocked them**. (comma and pause before “which”)

He taught me exactly how to act, **which is probably why I'm so comfortable doing it**. (two clauses of different types)

In each case, what does the form of the clause add to the meaning of the sentence? We'll be looking for answers to that question. We'll also show you how appositives, shortened relative clauses, can help you figure out the meaning of words so you don't have to use a dictionary quite so often. Here's an example from the first chapter of the book:

The hasuk-chip ajumma, the woman who ran the boarding house, took it upon herself to teach me the language.

Notice that inside the appositive, the woman who ran the boarding house, there is another relative clause.

- In English you can use a clause to modify a noun—the subject, predicate nominative, direct object, indirect object or object of a preposition. Take, for example, this sentence.

That book **which** I checked out of the library for you is overdue.

- We could say that this sentence comes from two shorter sentences.
 - (1) That book is overdue.
 - (2) I checked that book out of the library for you.

To form the relative clause, change “that book” in sentence 2 to “which.” Then move the “which” to the beginning of the clause.

- Relative pronouns can be substituted for the subject of the clause, the direct object, the indirect object, a possessive noun modifying another noun, or the object of a preposition. Any noun in the main clause may be modified by a relative clause.

Anne hops up to introduce him to Byong-ok, **who** rises as well. (subject)

That book **which** I checked out of the library for you is overdue. (direct object)

Mary greeted her son, (to) **whom** she gave a cookie. (indirect object/object of preposition)

Mary greeted her son, **who** she gave a cookie to. (indirect object/object of preposition)

He called the neighbor **whose** car was always parked in his driveway. (possessive)

- In formal English, use *whom* if the noun is the direct object, indirect object or object of a preposition in the relative clause. This is a word many people think is very snobbish, so they try to avoid it. They may use *who*, which some would say is incorrect.

Formal: The judge demanded to know **to whom** the letter was addressed.

Informal: He wanted to know **who** the letter was addressed **to**.

- Fortunately, when the relative pronoun is the object of the main clause, it may be omitted, or *that* may be substituted. This means the speaker isn't forced to use obviously formal or obviously informal language.

Formal: The professor **whom** I met at the opening ceremony said he was writing a book on Korean wildflowers.

Informal: The man (**that**) I marry will know how to cook and look after himself.

- The relative clause may define the person or thing it modifies—that is, show us who or what it is, as in the above example. “Which I checked out of the library for you” explains which book it is that’s overdue. In defining relative clauses, *that* may be used instead of *which*, or the pronoun may be omitted.

→ That book that I checked out of the library for you is overdue.

→ That book I checked out of the library for you is overdue.

Exercise 1: Rewrite each of the following sentences, making the clause in parentheses into a defining relative clause.

1. The assignment came directly from the president. (it has to be done by Monday)

-
2. I'll have to talk to the manager. (the manager's subordinate reported the problem.)
-

3. When we get to the restaurant, please point out the company employees. (I need to defer to them.) **Give both formal and informal usage.**

4. I don't know the person. (His or her message was left on my cellular phone.)

5. Tell us about some cultural mistakes. (You made the cultural mistakes when you came here.)

- If you want to add extra, non-essential information, you can put it in the form of a non-defining relative clause. Because this information doesn't help to identify a particular person or thing, it is set off from the main clause by commas. (This is generally true of extra information added to a sentence.) When a person is speaking, the non-defining clause is set off by pauses.

Example: Pres. Kim Dae-jung, **who** was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for working to establish a better relationship with North Korea, continues to press for an end to the National Security Law.

- Non-defining clauses which start with "which" may also refer to the entire preceding idea.

Even though it was close to midnight, the doctor offered to come over immediately, **which** I found extraordinary.

Exercise 2: Rewrite each of the following sentences, making the clause in parentheses into a non-defining relative clause.

1. My father-in-law came to lunch with me at the officer's club for the US Army. (My father-in-law held an important position in the Korean military.)

2. The deep bow goes back several hundred years. (The deep bow is similar to the traditional Buddhist bow.)

3. Ten times in one hour I had to tell the students to be quiet. (I found this very annoying.)

4. Korean values have created a nice place to live. (That's why we're here.)
-
-

5. I came here in 1966 with the Peace Corps. (The Peace Corps was founded by Pres. John F. Kennedy to send American volunteers to help people in developing countries.)
-
-

- When the noun modified by the clause refers to a place or a time, “where” or “when” may be used in speech or informal writing.

The end of 1997 was a time **when** many Westerners considered leaving Korea.
That's the coffee house **where** we met.

- Using “when” or “where” helps the speaker avoid using a relative pronoun with a preposition. Placement of the preposition before the relative may be too formal for the context and placement afterward may be too informal, awkward or even ungrammatical.

(awkward) The end of 1997 was a time **in which** many Westerners considered leaving Korea.

(ungrammatical) The end of 1997 was a time **which** many Westerners considered leaving Korea **in**.

Exercise 3: In front of each of the following sentences, circle “OK” or “not OK.” Then circle any element which is not okay.

1. OK not OK I don't care which phone you use; just call him.
2. OK not OK Our children wanted to know, where we met.
3. OK not OK President Clinton whose approval rating remained high during the impeachment hearings supported his wife's candidacy for the Senate.
4. OK not OK Hard work is fine, but you have to know when to stop.
5. OK not OK I need to know whom to send my application to.

- Non-defining relative clauses with “be” may be reduced to a noun phrase which supplies further information about the modified noun. These are called “appositives.” When reading, Korean students should be aware that information in commas following a noun phrase may further identify or define the preceding noun phrase. Here's an example for English speakers.

The *hasuk-chip ajumma*, **the woman who ran the boarding house**, took it upon herself to teach me the language.

Exercise 4: Rewrite each of the following sentences, making the sentence in parentheses into an appositive.

1. *Kim-chi* is a pickled cabbage similar to sauerkraut, but made with a lot of pepper and garlic. (*Kim-chi* is the Korean national dish)

2. The German company gave Klaus Mueller only a year to turn the business around. (Klaus Mueller is the president of the Korean branch of his company.)

3. Polite Korean requires the use of a lot of honorifics. (Honorifics are special verbs or special syllables added to verbs to show respect and deference to the speaker.)

Exercise: Rewrite each of the following items so that the first sentence is the main clause and the second is a relative clause or appositive. If there is a third sentence, that should also become a relative clause or appositive. Remember to add commas where necessary

1. Around the time I went through a phase.
At the time I started working in my current company
In this phase I didn't want to have anything to do with foreigners or to speak English.

2. At the dinner table I sat next to the guy and not too close to the daughter.
The guy introduced me.

3. That was one of the things.
Those things set me thinking about what I was doing.

4. Anne hops up to introduce him to Byong-ok.
Byong-ok rises as well.
-
-

5. I miss the discussions.
We had those discussions in Europe.
-
-

6. There seems to be no one.
I can share my indecision or go over policies or work out subtleties with no one.
-
-

7. So I went to them.
This at first shocked them.
-
-

8. I wanted to see the figures.
They had the figures.
-
-

9. I was pouring beer for another teacher.
The other teacher was a guy two years younger than me.
-
-

10. As long as you don't flout it and you turn your back, you can drink in a situation.
You can't smoke in that situation.
-
-

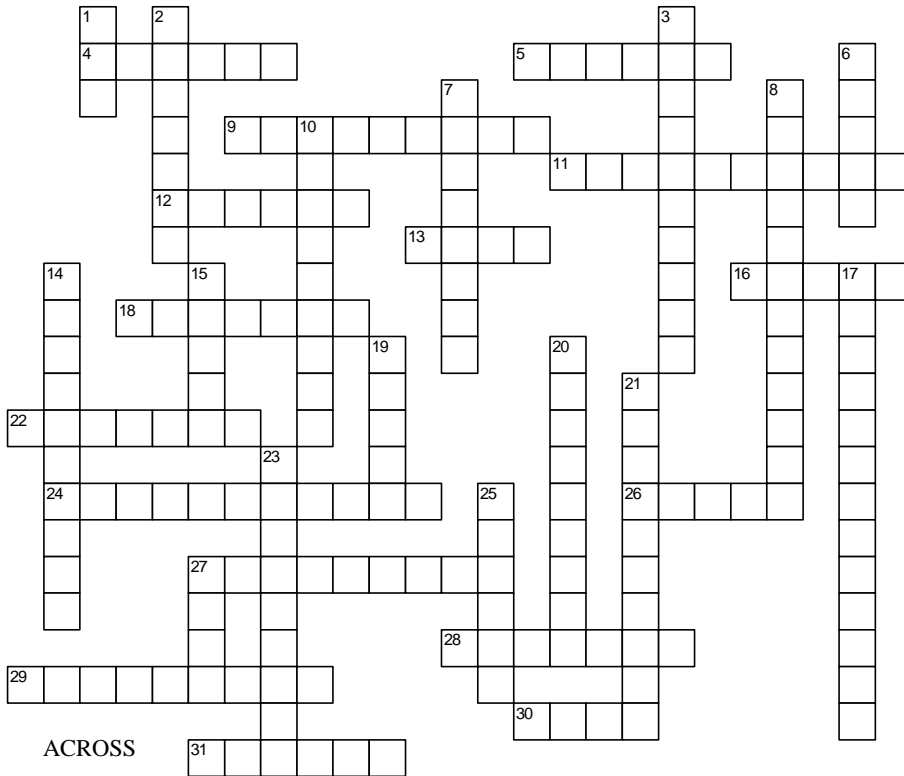
11. He's like a father to me.
He's a perfect mentor.
-
-

He taught me exactly how to act.
That's probably why I'm so comfortable doing it.

12. Maybe it's the Irish American inside me.
This person says these values are pretty good at knitting a society together.
-
-

13. I'm speaking of diligence, hard work and respect for other people.
Those values were drilled into me when I was young.
-
-

LET'S DO A ROSSWORD PUZZLE.



ACROSS

31

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- 4 Do, use or say something in a way that is too extreme; do too much of something
- 5 Things that are important to you that control your behavior
- 9 Cause someone to be known to someone else for the first time
- 11 Good manners
- 12 Informal, relaxed
- 13 Make a _____ of doing something; give the appearance of doing something
- 16 Command; tell someone to do something, particularly in an authoritarian way
- 18 Move someone up to a higher rank in an organization
- 22 Thinking only of yourself and not of others; egotistical
- 24 Someone in a lower position in an organization
- 26 Picture
- 27 Someone from a different country

- 28 Ridicule; make fun of; treat someone as unimportant (two words)
- 29 Polite and respectful behavior toward someone, especially because they have higher rank
- 30 Instruction about what you are allowed to do and what you aren't
- 31 Measured time, like in music

DOWN

- 1 Bend your body toward someone
- 2 High opinion of someone
- 3 If you have this, you are allowed to do something
- 6 Short speech made in honor of a person as glasses are raised
- 7 Person who believes that one can overcome suffering by following one of eight spiritual paths
- 8 Tending not to like or trust change
- 10 Belief, principle or

- way of behaving which people in a society or group have followed for a long time
- 14 Opinion or feeling people have about you from seeing your behavior
- 15 Traditional customs and ways of behavior for a particular country
- 17 Belief that the behavior of people in your ethnic group is the best; characteristic of people who can't see beyond their own country
- 19 Uncertainty about something, especially about how good or true it is
- 20 Mixed up and difficult to understand
- 21 Fit in or become similar to; fit into a new country
- 23 Arrangement of people by rank and authority
- 25 Serious and official, not relaxed or friendly
- 27 Respect and honor of others; you don't want to lose _____