

께

to — honorific

The respectful form of **에게 / 한테**. Marks the person receiving, when that person outranks you — and it obliges the verb to match.

How it attaches

Situation	Form	Example
Honorific recipient	께	선생님께 드렸어요
Honorific source	께 — same form	부모님께 배웠어요
Verb must match	드리다, 여쭙보다	말씀드렸어요
Ordinary people take	에게 / 한테	친구한테 줬어요
Places take	에	회사에 보냈어요
Acting, not receiving	께서	선생님께서 주셨어요

Notes

께 replaces **에게** and **한테** when the recipient is a teacher, a parent, a grandparent, a boss, or a client. It never changes shape and never attaches to a place — a company still takes **에**.

Using it commits the verb. Honorifics in Korean work as a set, so **께** pairs with the humble verbs: **주다** becomes **드리다**, **묻다** becomes **여쭙보다**, **말하다** becomes **말씀드리다**. **선생님께 여쭙었어요**.

There is one point that trips up almost everyone. **께** marks the person receiving; **께서** marks the person acting. One syllable separates them, and they point in opposite directions. **께** also covers the source, since there is no honorific form of **한테서**: **선생님께 배웠어요**.

Examples

- 1 선생님께 편지를 드렸어요.
I gave a letter to my teacher.
- 2 부모님께 안부 전해 주세요.
Please give my regards to your parents.
- 3 교수님께 여쭙보겠습니다.
I'll ask the professor.
- 4 할머니께 선물을 보냈어요.
I sent a present to my grandmother.
- 5 사장님께 보고드렸습니다.
I reported it to the director.
- 6 선배님께 조언을 구했어요.
I asked a senior colleague for advice.

Compared with

에게 / 한테

Same grammatical role, different level of respect. Reserve **께** for people you would address with a title.

친구한테 줬어요. / 선생님께 드렸어요.

께서

께서 makes the honoured person the subject; **께** makes them the recipient. Check who is doing and who is receiving before choosing.

선생님께서 주셨어요. (the teacher gave) / 선생님께 드렸어요. (I gave to the teacher)

한테서 / 에게서

There is no honorific ending in **서**. When the source deserves respect, **께** handles both directions and the verb settles the meaning.

친구한테서 들었어요. / 선생님께 들었어요.

Watch out

✗ 선생님께 책을 줬어요.

○ 선생님께 책을 드렸어요.

Once **께** marks the recipient, the verb has to rise with it. **주다** becomes **드리다**, and the mismatch is more noticeable than using no honorific at all.

✗ 친구께 선물을 줬어요.

○ 친구한테 선물을 줬어요.

께 is for people you honour. Applying it to a friend sounds strange, not extra polite.

✗ 선생님께서 책을 드렸어요.

○ 선생님께 책을 드렸어요.

드리다 means the speaker gives upward, so the teacher must be the recipient. **께서** would put the teacher in the giving role and contradict the verb.