

The Arabic Script

Arabic Alphabet Basics

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| Arabic is written from right to left.                | Unlike English, Arabic letters change form depending on their position in a word (beginning, middle, end, or isolated). |
| There are 28 basic letters in the Arabic alphabet.   | Arabic is a cursive script; letters are generally connected.  |
| Some letters do not connect to the following letter. | Short vowels are often not written but can be indicated with diacritics (tashkeel).                                     |
| ا  | Alif  |
| ب  | Ba  |
| ت  | Ta  |
| ث  | Tha   |

Pronunciation and Vowels

Consonants

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| Many Arabic consonants have no direct equivalent in English. Pay close attention to pronunciation.  |
| Some consonants are emphatic (pronounced deeper in the throat).   |
| <b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ح (Ḥa): A voiceless pharyngeal fricative, like clearing your throat.</li><li>ع (ʿAyn): A voiced pharyngeal fricative, also from the throat.</li><li>ق (Qāf): A voiceless uvular stop, produced at the back of the mouth.</li></ul> |

Letter Forms

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Initial (beginning of word)        | Letter connects on the right side only. |
| Medial (middle of word)            | Letter connects on both sides.          |
| Final (end of word)                | Letter connects on the left side only.  |
| Isolated (alone)                   | Letter does not connect.                |
| Example using the letter 'Ba' (ب): |   |
| Initial: بـ                        | Medial: بـ                              |
| Final: ـب                          | Isolated: ب                             |

Vowels

|  |   |
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| Short Vowels (indicated by diacritics):    | Long Vowels (letters):  |
| َ (Fatha): Short 'a' sound (like in 'cat') | ا (Alif): Long 'aa' sound (like in 'father')  |
| ِ (Kasra): Short 'i' sound (like in 'bit') | ي (Ya): Long 'ee' sound (like in 'see')   |
| ُ (Damma): Short 'u' sound (like in 'put') | و (Waw): Long 'oo' sound (like in 'food')   |
| Note:                                      | Diacritics are often omitted in written Arabic, especially in newspapers and books. Learners need to infer the correct vowel sounds from context. |

Basic Grammar

Sentence Structure

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| The basic sentence structure in Arabic is Verb-Subject-Object (VSO), although Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) is also common, especially in Modern Standard Arabic. |
| <b>Example (VSO):</b><br>كتب الطالب الدرس<br>kataba al-ṭālibu al-dars<br>Wrote the student the lesson (The student wrote the lesson)                          |
| <b>Example (SVO):</b><br>التابع كتب الدرس<br>al-ṭālibu kataba al-dars<br>The student wrote the lesson   |

Nouns and Articles

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| Arabic nouns have gender (masculine and feminine).             | Feminine nouns often end in ة (taa marbuta).   |
| Arabic has a definite article: الـ (al-).                      | There is no indefinite article (like 'a' or 'an' in English).  |
| The definite article is attached to the beginning of the noun. | Example:<br>كتاب (kitāb) - book<br>الكتاب (al-kitāb) - the book  |
| Sun and Moon Letters:  | When the definite article precedes a 'sun letter' (e.g., ت, د, ر), the 'l' sound in 'al-' assimilates to the sound of the sun letter. With 'moon letters' the 'l' sound is pronounced. |

Pronouns

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| Arabic pronouns are essential for constructing sentences. Here are some basic pronouns:  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>أنا ('anā): I</li><li>أنت ('anta): You (masculine)</li><li>أنتي ('anti): You (feminine)</li><li>هو (huwa): He</li><li>هي (hiya): She</li><li>نحن (naḥnu): We</li><li>أنتم ('antum): You (plural masculine)</li><li>أنتن ('antunna): You (plural feminine)</li><li>هم (hum): They (masculine)</li><li>هن (hunna): They (feminine)</li></ul> |

Basic Vocabulary

Greetings

|                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| السلام عليكم (as-salāmu ḥalaykum)    | Peace be upon you (formal greeting) |
| وعليكم السلام (wa ḥalaykumu s-salām) | And upon you be peace (response)    |
| مرحبا (marḥaban)                     | Hello (less formal)                 |
| أهلا ('ahlan)                        | Welcome                             |
| صباح الخير (ṣabāḥ al-khair)          | Good morning                        |
| مساء الخير (masā' al-khair)          | Good evening                        |

Common Phrases

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| نعم (naām)                 | Yes                  |
| لا (lā)                    | No                   |
| شكرا (shukran)             | Thank you            |
| من فضلك (min faḍlik)       | Please (to a male)   |
| من فضلكِ (min faḍliki)     | Please (to a female) |
| إلى اللقاء ('ilā al-liqā') | Goodbye              |

Basic Questions

|                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ما اسمك؟ (mā ismuk?) (m)            | What is your name? (to a male)    |
| ما اسمكِ؟ (mā ismuki?) (f)          | What is your name? (to a female)  |
| كيف حالك؟ (kayfa ḥāluk?) (m)        | How are you? (to a male)          |
| كيف حالكِ؟ (kayfa ḥāluki?) (f)      | How are you? (to a female)        |
| من أين أنت؟ (min 'ayna 'anta?) (m)  | Where are you from? (to a male)   |
| من أين أنتِ؟ (min 'ayna 'anti?) (f) | Where are you from? (to a female) |