

Introduction

THE ARABIC ALPHABET

Arabic is written from the right to the left. The Arabic alphabet has 29 letters. Before you learn anything more about the alphabet, do the following exercise.

1. Letter Shapes Exercise. This exercise is designed to make you think about shapes and help you identify common features. It is not designed to see if you have already memorised the Arabic alphabet. There is therefore, no single “correct” answer.

- Cut out the cards in the writing practice materials section at the back of this book.
- Spread these cards out on a table and look at the shapes on each card.
- Try arranging the shapes into logical groups: start by looking at their overall shape, then move on to other features, such as dots and tails.
- When you have done this, try to explain your arrangement to your teacher and classmates. Listen to the comments they have to make and be prepared to argue your case.
- Finally, look at the Alphabet Shapes and Groups table in the writing practice materials section at the back of this book to see how your arrangement compares.

The shapes you have just arranged are the 29 letters of the Arabic alphabet as they appear when written alone. (Each letter has two or three slightly different shapes, depending on whether it is used at the beginning, middle, or end of a word, or alone.) Before you practise writing the letters however, you must learn their sounds.

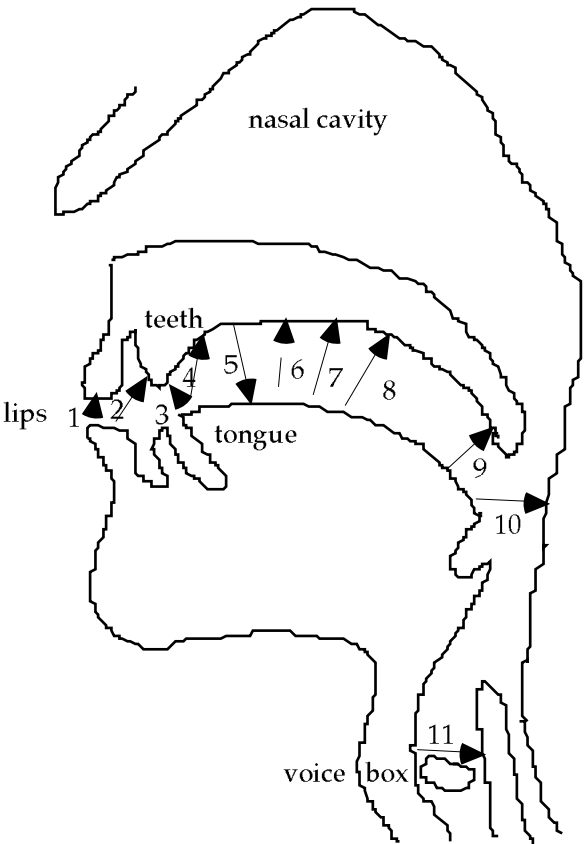
All but eight of the 29 sounds in the Arabic alphabet exist in English or its dialects. Look at the table on the next page and the ‘map’ of your mouth and throat and do the following exercise.



2. Letter Sounds Exercise. Listen and repeat each letter of the alphabet. Pay close attention to what part of your mouth or throat you are using to produce each sound. Check this with the ‘mouth map’ and your teacher. Don’t just rely on the example words in the sound column!

The eight sounds unfamiliar to English speaker are marked with an asterisk* in the table. Of these, the group of ‘emphatic’ consonants--س, ض, ط and ظ--presents the greatest problem. These sounds are characterised by a ‘heavy’ resonance which contrasts to the ‘light’ or ‘thin’ sound of the corresponding plain consonants س, د, ت and ز. To get the pronunciation right, begin by saying the ‘light’ version, for example س as in ‘Sam’. You will notice that the tip of your tongue touches the area just behind your upper front teeth. Now say it again, depressing the middle of your tongue (5 on the mouth map) and tensing the tongue muscles as you say it. This will cause the vowel sound to change and the whole word becomes more like ‘psalm’ than ‘Sam’. The reason for this is that by depressing your tongue, you have created a larger space between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. Then try this technique with each of the other three emphatic letters.

MOUTH MAP



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
-				t	ṭ		k		q		-q/ʾ
+	b			d	ḍ						
-		f	th	s	ṣ	sh		kh		h	h
+				z	ẓ	j		gh		ʿ	
+	m		n								
+			l								
+				r							
+	w						y				

+ voiced
- voiceless

Name	Alone	End	Middle	First	Trans	Sound
<i>Alif</i>	ا	ل	× ل	× ا	<i>aa</i>	as in 'car' or as in 'ma'am'
<i>Baa</i>	ب	ب	ب	ب	<i>b</i>	as in 'bet'
<i>Taa</i>	ت	ت	ت	ت	<i>t</i>	as in 'till'
<i>Thaa</i>	ث	ث	ث	ث	<i>th</i> <i>t</i> <i>s</i>	sometimes as in 'thin' sometimes as 'till' sometimes as in 'Sam'
<i>Jiim</i>	ج	ج	ج	ج	<i>j</i>	as in 'jam'
<i>Haa*</i>	ح	ح	ح	ح	<i>h*</i>	breathe out forcibly from throat as if cleaning glasses
<i>Khaa</i>	خ	خ	خ	خ	<i>kh</i>	as in Scottish 'loch'
<i>Daah</i>	د	د	× د	× د	<i>d</i>	as in 'dim'
<i>Zaal</i>	ذ	ذ	× ذ	× ذ	<i>d</i> <i>z</i>	usually as in 'dim' sometimes as in 'zinc'
<i>Raa</i>	ر	ر	× ر	× ر	<i>r</i>	as in a trilled 'run'
<i>Zaay</i>	ز	ز	× ز	× ز	<i>z</i>	as in 'zinc'
<i>Siin</i>	س	س	س	س	<i>s</i>	as in 'Sam'
<i>Shiin</i>	ش	ش	ش	ش	<i>sh</i>	as in shoe
<i>Ṣaad*</i>	ص	ص	ص	ص	<i>ṣ*</i>	almost as in 'psalm'
<i>Ḍaad*</i>	ض	ض	ض	ض	<i>ḍ*</i>	almost as in 'dumb'
<i>Ṭaa*</i>	ط	ط	ط	ط	<i>ṭ*</i>	almost as in 'tar'
<i>Zaa</i>	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	<i>ḍ*</i> <i>z*</i>	usually as in 'dumb' sometimes as in 'zeal'
<i>Ḥayn*</i>	ع	ع	ع	ع	<i>ḥ*</i>	a voiced version of <i>h</i>
<i>Ghayn</i>	غ	غ	غ	غ	<i>gh</i>	a voiced version of <i>kh</i>
<i>Faa</i>	ف	ف	ف	ف	<i>f</i>	as in 'off'
<i>Qaaf*</i>	ق	ق	ق	ق	<i>q</i> <i>q*</i>	usually as in the sound between 'uh oh' (a glottal stop) sometimes as a deep-throated <i>k</i>
<i>Kaaf</i>	ك	ك	ك	ك	<i>k</i>	as in 'king'
<i>Laam</i>	ل	ل	ل	ل	<i>l</i>	as in 'laugh'
<i>Miim</i>	م	م	م	م	<i>m</i>	as in 'moon'
<i>Nuun</i>	ن	ن	ن	ن	<i>n</i>	as in 'neat'
<i>Haa</i>	ه	ه	ه	ه	<i>h</i>	as in 'hang'
<i>Waaw</i>	و	و	× و	× و	<i>w (uuloo)</i>	as in 'wet' (see pg 13)
<i>Yaa</i>	ي	ي	ي	ي	<i>y (iilee)</i>	as in 'yet' (see pg 13)
<i>Taa marbuuta</i>	ة	ة	(ت)	see page 11)	<i>e</i> <i>a</i>	usually as in 'pet' sometimes as in 'cat'
<i>Hamza</i>	ء				'	a glottal stop

Legend: * sounds unfamiliar to an English speaker. × cannot join to a letter following

Name	Alone	End	Middle	First	Trans	Sound
<i>Alif</i>	ا	ل	× ل	× ا	<i>aa</i>	as in 'car' or as in 'ma'am'
<i>Baa</i>	ب	ب	ب	ب	<i>b</i>	as in 'bet'
<i>Taa</i>	ت	ت	ت	ت	<i>t</i>	as in 'till'
<i>Thaa</i>	ث	ث	ث	ث	<i>th</i> <i>t</i> <i>s</i>	sometimes as in 'thin' sometimes as 'till' sometimes as in 'Sam'
<i>Jiim</i>	ج	ج	ج	ج	<i>j</i>	as in 'jam'
<i>Haa*</i>	ح	ح	ح	ح	<i>h*</i>	breathe out forcibly from throat as if cleaning glasses
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<i>Shiin</i>	ش	ش	ش	ش	<i>sh</i>	as in shoe
<i>Saad*</i>	ص	ص	ص	ص	<i>s*</i>	almost as in 'psalm'
<i>Daad*</i>	ض	ض	ض	ض	<i>d*</i>	almost as in 'dumb'
<i>Taa*</i>	ط	ط	ط	ط	<i>t*</i>	almost as in 'tar'
<i>Zaa</i>	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	<i>d*</i> <i>z*</i>	usually as in 'dumb' sometimes as in 'zeal'
<i>ayn*</i>	ع	ع	ع	ع	<i>e*</i>	a voiced version of <i>h</i>
<i>Ghayn</i>	غ	غ	غ	غ	<i>gh</i>	a voiced version of <i>kh</i>
<i>Faa</i>	ف	ف	ف	ف	<i>f</i>	as in 'off'
<i>Qaaf*</i>	ق	ق	ق	ق	<i>q</i>	usually as in the sound between 'uh oh' (a glottal stop)
	ق	ق	ق	ق	<i>q*</i>	sometimes as a deep-throated <i>k</i>
<i>Kaaf</i>	ك	ك	ك	ك	<i>k</i>	as in 'king'
<i>Laam</i>	ل	ل	ل	ل	<i>l</i>	as in 'laugh'
<i>Miim</i>	م	م	م	م	<i>m</i>	as in 'moon'
<i>Nuun</i>	ن	ن	ن	ن	<i>n</i>	as in 'neat'
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<i>Taa marbuuta</i>	ة	ة	(ت see page 11)		<i>e</i> <i>a</i>	usually as in 'pet' sometimes as in 'cat'
<i>Hamza</i>	ء				'	a glottal stop

Legend: * sounds unfamiliar to an English speaker. × cannot join to a letter following

3. **Letter Writing Practice.** Each letter has two or three slightly different shapes, depending on whether it is used alone or at the beginning, middle, or end of a word. Use the worksheets to practise writing the letters. Make sure you follow the direction of the arrows. As you write each letter practise saying the sound.

Note that letters which have 'tails' looping below the line lose them when they are joined to another letter.

Similarly shaped letters with a different number of dots might be hard to remember. To help you, you can make up reminder phrases, for example

- one dot north is ن *n*
- one dot below is ب *b*
- two dots above is ت *t*
- three dots above is ث *th*
- two dots below y remind you of e-y-es, while if you tilt your head when you look at ي at the end of a word, it looks like this ...ay!

4. **Can you identify letters within words?** Circle all the letters which correspond with the letter on the right (regardless of position), for example

ب	بهر	كبت	يتم	كتب
ا	اب	راي	بدها	قلب
ب	برج	لعب	ورد	كبد
ت	شرب	كبت	تعب	كتب
ث	وثق	بحث	ثبت	تحت
ج	حلج	جرح	رجح	لوح
ح	فجل	لوح	حول	فحص
خ	رخصة	جمع	وسخ	خسر
د	عود	ودع	رسم	دفع
ذ	ذهب	ذكي	نوم	بدل
ر	وزن	عصر	قرص	رسم
ز	ذكي	بزر	زرع	ذكر

س	عسل	شرس	سمع	شرب
ش	وشوش	رسب	شمس	دشر
ص	قصر	فرض	صعب	ناقص
ض	ضرب	بعض	شمل	حضر
ط	نقط	زرع	مطر	طقس
ظ	بوظة	ظرف	حفظ	جضر
ع	بنت	فعل	عمل	وقع
غ	بالغ	غير	عدل	بغل
ف	نفس	فشل	سرق	عرف
ق	فول	قفل	عقل	فوق
ك	كتب	ضحك	قطع	ركب
ل	رأي	قول	كلب	لعب
م	لوم	مسح	نهار	عمل
ن	نمل	تمر	عند	عين
ه	هرب	شمس	نهر	معه/ياه
و	قمر	ولو	قول	فطم
ي	بيت	تبع	علي	يمين
ة	عشرة	قطعة	ايوه	عربية

5. The words in the column on the right are all names of capitals, and the words in the column on the left are all countries. Match each capital with its country. Refer to the table on page 3 if you need to. Note that except at the beginning of a word *w* and *y* can also be pronounced *uu* (or *oo*) and *ii* (or *ee*) respectively.

باريس	كينيا
واشنطن	عمان
بروكسيل	فرنسا
كنبرا	بريطانيا
مسقط	بلجيكا
لندن	اليابان
دمشق	امريكا
نايروبي	فنلندا
بيروت	بولندا
هيلسنكي	لبنان
طوكيو	سوريا
وارسو	استراليا

6. Write each of the words in the previous exercise. The rule of thumb when joining letters is

- all letters can be joined to the previous letter;
- all but six letters--*aa* ا, *r* ر, *z* ز, *d* د, *d/z* ذ, and *w* و--can be joined to the letter following; and
- try not to take your pen off the paper (unless a letter cannot be joined) until you have finished writing the whole word, then go back and add the dots.

باريس

7. This exercise is to help you identify word shapes. Circle the two matching words, as shown in the example.

نزل	بارك	بارد	نازل	بارز	بارد	راتب
طلب	كلام	طالب	كلاب	طالب	ظلم	طلاب
كاتب	كتاب	كلاب	كبار	كثار	كتاب	كثر
كان	كلب	كبد	كلاب	كتب	كيلو	كلب
بات	ياه	باب	ناب	باب	بال	تاب
كبير	كثير	كبيرة	كبير	كنز	بكر	كريم
ثلج	بلغ	بلع	باع	بلع	نام	بلع
شوية	شمسية	شتوية	إشارة	شمسية	شايفة	بيشوي
سنويا	سورية	سيارة	استنى	ستمية	سيارة	ساويت
دور	دري	ذكر	دار	ذكي	دار	روى
واعة	واحد	وحيد	وادي	واحدة	واحد	واجه
سلام	سلالم	اسلام	سلم	سلام	مسلم	سليم
جواب	حارب	جايب	خرجت	جرحت	حليب	جايب
مفتوح	مفاتيح	معافى	مفتاح	منفوخ	مفتاح	مغسلة
نبىذ	بريد	فريد	برد	ترد	بريد	مدير

8. The words in the column on the right are all the first names of famous actors, and the words in the column on the left are their last names. *Try to read each one without referring to the table on page 3 and then match the first and last names.*

طوني	براندو
مارلين	تايلور
رتشارد	برتون
مارلون	كيرتس
بريجيت	لي
جون	مونرو
صوفيا	فوندا
إليزابيث	باردو
جين	لورين
بروس	ترافولتا

9. Write your own name in Arabic here.



10. Listen to each word and fill in the missing dots either above or below the letters, as necessary.

- | | | | |
|----|--------|--------|-------|
| ١ | بات | بست | بيت |
| ٢ | باب | باب | بان |
| ٣ | باب | إيس | لین |
| ٤ | بك | عب | صااب |
| ٥ | بي | كب | بس |
| ٦ | بس | راب | ببااب |
| ٧ | صااب | بااباا | برول |
| ٨ | بارل | بارر | بون |
| ٩ | بوربون | براادي | بييت |
| ١٠ | بريد | حاب | بس |

11. Join the letters to make Arabic names. Remember, try not to take your pen off the paper until you have finished writing the whole word.

- | | | |
|------------|---------------|----|
| محمد | م ح م د | ١ |
| ..... | أ ح م د | ٢ |
| ..... | إ ب ر ا ه ي م | ٣ |
| ..... | ع ل ي | ٤ |
| ..... | ه ش ا م | ٥ |
| ..... | ي و س ف | ٦ |
| ..... | ع ب د ا ل ل ه | ٧ |
| ..... | ف ا ي ز | ٨ |
| ..... | ر ي م ا | ٩ |
| ..... | س م ي ر ة | ١٠ |
| ..... | م ر ي م | ١١ |
| ..... | و ف ا ء | ١٢ |
| ..... | ه د ي | ١٣ |
| ..... | ف ا ط م ة | ١٤ |
| ..... | ز ي ن ب | ١٥ |

By now you should be familiar with the shapes and sounds of the Arabic alphabet. If you wish to practise your writing even more there are additional alphabet practice sheets at the back of the book.



THE TAA MARBUUTA ة OR ِ

The *taa marbuuta* ة or ِ only comes at the end of nouns and adjectives and tells you that the word is feminine. The sound of the *taa marbuuta* ة or ِ is either 'a' as in 'cat', or 'e' as in 'pet', depending on which letter comes before it:

pronounced 'e' after

ي و ن م ل ك ف ش س ز ذ د ج ث ت ب
y w n m l k f sh s z d j t b

pronounced 'a' after

ه غ ع ظ ط ض ص خ ح ق ء
h gh e t d s kh h q

In other words, consonants that you are familiar with in English, such as *b* ب, *t* ت, *j* ج and so on, are followed by an 'e' sound while consonants peculiar to Arabic, such as *h* ح and *kh* خ, are followed by an 'a' sound. Only *r* ر is pronounced one way or the other, depending on the word.

The *taa marbuuta* is not officially a letter of the Arabic alphabet and is often called a 'hybrid' letter. This is because when you attach something to the end of word with a *taa marbuuta*--such as an attached pronoun--both the shape and sound of the *taa marbuuta* change to ت *t*.



THE HAMZA ء

The sound of *ahamza* is a glottal stop and it is transliterated '. The *hamza* ء is also not strictly speaking a letter. In fact, the hamza is a very strange creature indeed. Born without legs, you either find it sitting on another letter, or on the ground, for example

أب إن رئيس شؤون شاطئ شهداء
'ab 'énn ra'iis shu'uun shaati' shuhada'

The rules about which letter the *hamza* sits on are very complicated and more confusing than simply memorising the spelling of each word as it comes.



VOWELS

There are two types of vowels in Arabic: long and short. Short vowels are not represented by letters, but by small symbols above or below the letters. A text in which all the short vowels are indicated by these symbols is called a 'fully vowelled text'. Apart from the Qur'aan and children's books, fully vowelled texts are rare. In a normal text, unless a word is ambiguous, these symbols are never written. The symbols of the short vowels (written above the letter *b* ب) and the sounds they represent are:

<i>Fatha</i>	َ	<i>a</i>	as in 'cat'
<i>Kasra</i>	ِ	<i>e</i>	as in 'pet'
	ِ	<i>i</i>	as in 'pin'
		<i>é</i>	half the length of 'earn'
<i>Damma</i>	ُ	<i>o</i>	as in <u>no</u> te
		<i>u</i>	as in <u>pu</u> t

At the end of some words you will see a double *Fatha* on an *Alif* أ. This is pronounced *an* أ.



12. Listen to each word. Look at its transliteration on the right and circle the corresponding Arabic word. Then write in the short vowel symbols, for example

كبد	كبر	كذب	كُتِبَ	١	<i>kétob</i>
ذرة	درس	دخل	ذقن	٢	<i>daras</i>
خبر	حبر	جبل	خطب	٣	<i>jabal</i>
شرب	شرس	شرف	شرق	٤	<i>shéreb</i>
كتب	قرب	قطن	قبل	٥	<i>katab</i>
متر	مدن	مزح	ملح	٦	<i>médon</i>
لبن	بلع	لعب	لبس	٧	<i>lébes</i>
طعم	طبخ	طلع	طقس	٨	<i>ṭabakh</i>
قرن	فهم	فحم	قمح	٩	<i>féhem</i>
لبن	لعب	لغة	لبس	١٠	<i>luḡha</i>

Long vowels have their own letters and are always written. The long vowels are:

<i>Alif</i>	ا	<i>aa</i>	as in 'car' or as in 'ma'am'
<i>Yaa</i>	ي	<i>ii</i>	as in 'meet'
		<i>ee</i>	as in 'air' (without the r)
<i>Waaʿw</i>	و	<i>uu</i>	as in 'food'
		<i>oo</i>	as in 'awe'

The 'semi-vowels' *Waaʿw* و and *Yaa* ي are pronounced as the consonants 'w' and 'y' respectively both at the beginning of a word or when they come before or after another long vowel.

Vowel sounds are also affected by emphatic consonants *ṣ* ض, *ḍ* ذ, and *ṭ* ط. In fact, this effect often spreads over the whole word making other consonant sounds 'darker'.



13. Listen and circle the word you hear. Only one of each set will be read. Pay attention to the length and position of the vowels, for example

- | | |
|-------|---------|
| سامح | ١ سمح |
| قاتل | ٢ قتل |
| مين | ٣ من |
| رسول | ٤ رسل |
| سين | ٥ سن |
| مطار | ٦ مطر |
| ركاب | ٧ راكب |
| معامل | ٨ معمل |
| رفيع | ٩ رفع |
| مكتوب | ١٠ مكتب |



THE *SUKUUN* ْ

Sometimes a consonant carries no vowel at all. The symbol for this is written above the consonant thus ْ and is called a '*sukuun*'. In transliteration this is indicated simply by writing the consonant alone, as in *ktāb* كِتَاب (a book). Like the symbols for short vowels however, the *sukuun* is rarely written in a normal Arabic text.



14. First listen to these words. Then look at the transliteration and write in the short vowel and *sukuun* symbols as necessary, for example

مِفْتَاحْ	<i>méftaah</i>	١
كِتَابْ	<i>ktāb</i>	٢
دَفْتَرْ	<i>daftar</i>	٣
مَكْتَبْ	<i>maktab</i>	٤
مَنْوَبْ	<i>mnoob</i>	٥
كَبِيرْ	<i>kbür</i>	٦
أَكْبَرْ	<i>akbar</i>	٧
بِنَفْسْ	<i>binafs</i>	٨
مَرْكَزْ	<i>markaz</i>	٩
مَنْيَحْ	<i>nnih</i>	١٠



THE SHADDA ّ

Sometimes a consonant is doubled in length. The symbol for this is written above the consonant thus ّ and is called a 'shadda'. In transliteration this is indicated by writing the consonant twice, for example *mudarris* مدرّس (a male teacher). Unlike the other symbols, the *shadda* is often written in a normal Arabic text to ensure the meaning of a word is clear. Compare the following words in the Arabic script

<i>mudarrise</i>	a female teacher	مدرّسة
<i>madrise</i>	a school	مدرسة

Note that if a consonant carries both a *shadda* and a *kasra* then the *kasra* is not written under the consonant, but under the *shadda* above the consonant, for example

مدرّسة	NOT	مدرّسة
--------	-----	--------



15. Listen and circle the word you hear. Only one of each set will be read. Pay close attention to the length of the consonants, for example

سبب	سبب	١
درس	درس	٢
قطع	قطع	٣
كسر	كسر	٤
وصل	وصل	٥
ضحك	ضحك	٦
دهن	دهن	٧
وقع	وقع	٨
شعل	شعل	٩
طلع	طلع	١٠
بياع	باع	١١
جراح	جرح	١٢



16. Can you tell the difference between almost identical words? Listen to these words and circle the word you hear. Only one of each set will be read, for example

١	كَلْب	قَلْب	قَرَب
٢	مَغْلَف	مُؤَلَّف	مَعْلَق
٣	حَجَر	شَجَر	جَرَح
٤	حَجَرَة	حَشْرَة	هَجَرَة
٥	تَهْدِيد	تَحْدِيد	تَجْدِيد
٦	شَقَّ	شَطَّ	شَكَّ
٧	طَيَار	تِيَار	ثِيَاب
٨	مَثِير	مَصِير	قَصِير
٩	بَلَع	بَلَّغ	بَلَح
١٠	ضَبَّ	ظَنَّ	ذَنَب
١١	مَفْعُول	مَعْقُول	مَشْغُول
١٢	فَرَاخ	قَرَار	فَرَار
١٣	كَامِلَة	كَامِل	كَلِمَة
١٤	صَيْف	ضَيْف	سَيْف
١٥	رِسَالَة	غَسَّالَة	غَزَالَة
١٦	شَبَاط	ثَابِت	شَبَّاک
١٧	ظَرِيف	صَدِيق	طَرِيق
١٨	سَوَّال	مَسَائِل	سَأَلَ
١٩	ضَيَّعَ	ضَيَّفَ	ضَيَّقَ
٢٠	دَلَّ	ضَلَّ	طَلَّ



SUN LETTERS

Locally, Damascus is called *ésh-shaam* الشام rather than *Dimashq* دمشق. Note the first *sh*- in *ésh-shaam* is actually written *al-* ال in Arabic. *al-* ال is the Arabic definite article, like “the” in English, and is pronounced *l-*, *él-* or *lé-* depending on the sentence. The most important thing to remember is that when it comes before a word beginning with a ‘sun letter’:

ن ل ظ ط ض ص ش س ز ر ذ د ث ت
n l ẓ ṭ ṣ ṣ š s z r ḏ ḏ ṯ ṯ

The sun letter is doubled and the ‘l’ sound disappears. This means *él-shaam* is pronounced *ésh-shaam*. All the other letters are called ‘moon letters’, except *j* ج which can be either depending on the word and the speaker.



17. Listen to the words and circle those beginning with a sun letter. Then write each word with the definite article *él-* ال, for example

eg *shams* > *ésh-shams*



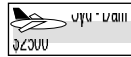
شمس > الشمس

qamar > *él-qamar*



قمر > القمر

a. *tazkara* >



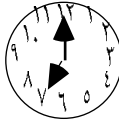
تذكرة >

b. *hawyye* >



هوية >

c. *saʿa* >



ساعة >

d. *maṣraf* >



مصرف >

e. *fənduq* >



فندق >

f. *suura* >



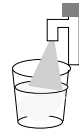
صورة >

g. *daftar* >



دفتر >

h. *mayy* >



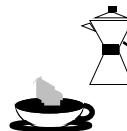
مي >

i. *shaay* >



شاي >

j. *qahwe* >



قهوة >



TRANSLITERATION

There is no official, or even standard way to write Arabic in roman letters. The method of transliteration used in this book is designed for the ease of a native speaker of English and uses as many English letters as possible, rather than phonetic symbols. The font used is METimes, designed specifically for the transliteration of Arabic.

One Arabic letter is used to represent itself-- ع --rather than by an opening quotation mark (‘) as is common. This is to distinguish it clearly from the *Hamza* which is represented by a closing quotation mark (’).

Dots under letters--ص, *d* ض, ط, *z* ظ, ح, *h*--indicate they are emphatic. A line underneath two letters indicates that they should be said together, not as two separate letters, for example *sh* ش NOT *sh* سه and *kh* خ NOT *kh* كه.

The strike-through bar is used with ق *q* to indicate that it is pronounced as a glottal stop (as opposed to *q* ق which is pronounced as a deep-throated *k*). In Syrian colloquial almost all *Qaafs* are pronounced as a glottal stop.



HELPING VOWELS

The small raised letter ^é in the transliteration is pronounced the same as *é*. While *é* occurs as an integral part of words, ^é is a “helping vowel”, used to keep consonants coming together in awkward combinations.

The basic rule is in a string of three consonants, the first and second consonant must be separated by a helping vowel. For example, these two words need no helping vowel when alone

<i>qareet</i>	I read	قریت
<i>kaab</i>	a book	کتاب

but look what happens when they are put together in a sentence:

<i>qareet^ékaab</i>	I read a book	قریت کتاب
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The Arabic script of course does not change. Similarly, when the definite article *él-* ال (the) precedes a noun beginning with a consonant cluster, for example:

<i>él + kaab</i>	the + book	ال + کتاب
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the position of the *é* sound moves between the first and second consonants.

<i>lé-kaab</i>	the book	الکتاب
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ACCENT AND INTONATION

There is not much point in writing an explanation of the rules of Arabic accent and intonation. It is better for you to develop your own feel by listening carefully to native speakers, either in person or on the tape. You will probably find that Arabic accent and stress patterns are relatively straightforward. There are a few points you should keep in mind however, which can make a big difference to being understood:

- length of vowel: be careful to make long vowels LONG
- doubled consonants (*shadda*): be careful to linger (counting “one-two” helps) over doubled consonants
- attached pronouns: be aware that the stress of, and position of vowels in a word change significantly when a pronoun is attached. This can make a word sound completely different.



THE ROOT SYSTEM

All Arabic words are derived from ‘roots’ which contain the basic meaning of the word. The root is made of three consonants. It is useful to be able to identify the root of a word because:

- the root of an unfamiliar word will often help you to guess its meaning; and
- Arabic dictionaries are generally arranged by root, rather than alphabetically.

For example the root *k-t-b* ك-ت-ب means “write”. Here are some words based on this root

<i>ktāb</i>	a book	كتاب
<i>kaateb</i>	a writer	كاتب
<i>maktab</i>	an office	مكتب
<i>maktabe</i>	a library	مكتبة
<i>maktuub</i>	a letter	مكتوب
<i>byéktob</i>	he writes	بيكتب
<i>am yéktob</i>	he is writing	عم يكتب

The vowels and the non-root letters give the word its specific meaning. The pattern of vowels and non-root letters itself carries meaning. For example, the pattern *maC₁C₂aC₃* (where *C* is a root letter) means “place”, so *maktab* مكتب means “place of writing”, *mal'ab* ملعب (root *l-ʿ-b* ل-ع-ب “play”) means “playground” and *matbakh* مطبخ (root *t-b-kh* ط-ب-خ “cook”) means “kitchen”.

As you progress you will get a feel for the meaning of various patterns, and we will highlight particularly common or useful patterns when they come up in the text.

When trying to identify the root of a word you might be confused by certain ‘pattern’ letters. Although these letters do occur regularly in roots, discard them first if there is confusion. These red herring letters are:

s-ʿa-l-t-m-w-n-y-h-aa

سألتمونيها

18. Four of the five words are from the same root. Circle the odd word out and write the common root letters in the space on the left, for example

١	مدرسة	تدريس	دروس	تصدير	دارس	د-ر-س
٢	اسلام	مسلم	سليم	سلال	سلام	
٣	مكتبة	مكتوب	كب	كاتب	كتبوا	
٤	راكب	مركب	أكبر	تركيب	ارتكب	
٥	عرفانة	معروف	ارتفع	معارف	عارف	
٦	صفّي	أوصاف	مصفاين	تصفاية	صفّيت	
٧	عمل	معامل	تعليم	إستعمال	عمّال	
٨	جمال	حاملة	حمل	حوامل	اتحمل	
٩	مضربة	صبور	ضربت	ضريبة	مضارب	
١٠	أعصاب	عصاة	متعصب	عصبى	غصب	