

About Arabic Language

America's growing ties to the Arab world are drawing increased attention to this field of study. American political, religious, and business leaders are eager to learn more about Arabic culture and history. Courses of study include the Qur'an in Arabic history, Arabic political discourse, and modern Arabic literature as well as a facility with reading and/or speaking the Arabic language. Graduates go on to careers in teaching, translating, publishing, and multinational business.

MINOR IN ARABIC LANGUAGE

COURSES

Arabic script

Origin

The Arabic script evolved from the [Nabataean](#) Aramaic script. It has been used since the 4th century AD, but the earliest document, an inscription in Arabic, [Syriac](#) and [Greek](#), dates from 512 AD. The Aramaic language has fewer consonants than Arabic, so during the 7th century new Arabic letters were created by adding dots to existing letters in order to avoid ambiguities. Further diacritics indicating short vowels were introduced, but are only generally used to ensure the Qur'an was read aloud without mistakes.

There are two main types of written Arabic:

1. **Classical Arabic** - the language of the Qur'an and classical literature. It differs from Modern Standard Arabic mainly in style and vocabulary, some of which is archaic. All Muslims are expected to recite the Qur'an in the original language, however many rely on translations in order to understand the text.
2. **Modern Standard Arabic** - the universal language of the Arabic-speaking world which is understood by all Arabic speakers. It is the language of the vast majority of written material and of formal TV shows, lectures, etc.

Each Arabic speaking country or region also has its own variety of colloquial spoken Arabic. These colloquial varieties of Arabic appear in written form in some poetry, cartoons and comics, plays and personal letters. There are also translations of the bible into most varieties of colloquial Arabic.

Arabic has also been written with the [Hebrew](#), [Syriac](#) and [Latin](#) scripts.

Notable Features

- The Arabic alphabet contains 28 letters. Some additional letters are used in Arabic when writing placenames or foreign words containing sounds which do not occur in Standard Arabic, such as /p/ or /g/.
- Words are written in horizontal lines from right to left, numerals are written from left to right
- Most letters change form depending on whether they appear at the beginning, middle or end of a word, or on their own. ([see below](#))
- Letters that can be joined are always joined in both hand-written and printed Arabic. The only exceptions to this rule are crossword puzzles and signs in which the script is written vertically.
- The long vowels /a:/, /i:/ and /u:/ are represented by the letters 'alif, yā' and wāw respectively.
- Vowel diacritics, which are used to mark short vowels, and other special symbols appear only in the Qur'an. They are also used, though with less consistency, in other religious texts, in classical poetry, in books for children and foreign learners, and occasionally in complex texts to avoid ambiguity. Sometimes the diacritics are used for decorative purposes in book titles, letterheads, nameplates, etc.

ARABIC CONSONANTS

IPA	Latin	Name	Final	Medial	Initial	Isolated	IPA	Latin	Name	Final	Medial	Initial	Isolated	
[tʰ]	t	tā'	طاء	ط	ط	ط	[ʔ]	'(a)	'alif	ألف	ا	—	—	ا
[zʰ]	z	zā'	ظاء	ظ	ظ	ظ	[b]	b	bā'	باء	ب	ب	ب	ب
[ʔ]	'	'ayn	عين	ع	ع	ع	[t]	t	tā'	تاء	ت	ت	ت	ت
[ɣ]	ġ	ġayn	غين	غ	غ	غ	[θ]	t	tā'	ثاء	ث	ث	ث	ث
[f]	f	fā'	فاء	ف	ف	ف	[ɟ]	ġ	ġim	جيم	ج	ج	ج	ج
[q]	q	qāf	قاف	ق	ق	ق	[ħ]	h	hā'	حاء	ح	ح	ح	ح
[k]	k	kāf	كاف	ك	ك	ك	[χ]	h	hā'	خاء	خ	خ	خ	خ
[l]	l	lām	لام	ل	ل	ل	[d]	d	dāl	دال	د	—	—	د
[m]	m	mīm	ميم	م	م	م	[ð]	d	dāl	ذال	ذ	—	—	ذ
[n]	n	nūn	نون	ن	ن	ن	[r]	r	rā'	راء	ر	—	—	ر
[h]	h	hā'	هاء	ه	ه	ه	[z]	z	zāy	زاي	ز	—	—	ز
[w]	w	wāw	واو	و	—	و	[s]	s	sīn	سين	س	س	س	س
[j]	y	yā'	ياء	ي	ي	ي	[ʃ]	š	šīn	شين	ش	ش	ش	ش
		hamza	همزة	ء	—	—	[sʰ]	š	šād	صاد	ص	ص	ص	ص
							[dʰ]	ḍ	ḍād	ضاد	ض	ض	ض	ض

The transliteration of consonants used above is the ISO version of 1984. There are various other ways of transliterating Arabic.

ARABIC VOWEL DIACRITICS AND OTHER SYMBOLS

لَا	بُ	بِ	بَ	بْ	بُ	بِي	بَا	بُ	بِ	بَ	
lām 'alif				šadda	sukūn			ḍamma	kasra	fatha	
lā	bbu	bbi	bba	bb	b	bū	bī	bā	bu	bi	ba

ARABIC NUMERALS AND NUMBERS

These numerals are those used when writing Arabic and are written from left to right. In Arabic they are known as "Indian numbers" (هندية أرقام arqa-m hindiyyah). The term 'Arabic numerals' is also used to refer to 1, 2, 3, etc.

٠	١	٢	٣	٤	٥	٦	٧	٨	٩	١٠
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
صفر	واحد	إثنان	ثلاثة	أربعة	خمسة	ستة	سبعة	ثمانية	تسعة	عشرة
ṣifr	wāḥid	itnān	ṭalāṭah	'arba'ah	ḥamsah	sittah	sab'ah	ṭamāniyyah	tis'ah	'ašarah
صفر	واحد	إثنين	ثلاثة	أربعة	خمسة	ستة	سبعة	ثمانية	تسعة	عشرة
ṣifr	wāḥid	'itnayn	ṭalāṭa	arba'a	ḥamsa	sitta	sab'a	tamanya	tis'a	'ašara
صفر	واحد	جوج	تلاتة	ربعة	خمسة	ستة	سبعة	ثمانية	تسعود	عشرة
ṣifr	wāḥed	žūž	tlata	reb'a	ḥemsa	setta	seb'a	tmenya	tes'ūd	'ašara

The first set of numbers are Modern Standard Arabic. The second set are Egyptian Arabic and the third set are Moroccan Arabic.

The Arabic language

Arabic is a Semitic language with about 221 million speakers in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Chad, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Palestinian West Bank & Gaza, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

There are over 30 different varieties of colloquial Arabic which include:

- **Egyptian** - spoken by about 50 million people in Egypt and perhaps the most widely understood variety, thanks to the popularity of Egyptian-made films and TV shows
- **Algerian** - spoken by about 22 million people in Algeria
- **Moroccan/Maghrebi** - spoken in Morocco by about 19.5 million people
- **Sudanese** - spoken in Sudan by about 19 million people
- **Saidi** - spoken by about 19 million people in Egypt
- **North Levantine** - spoken in Lebanon and Syria by about 15 million people
- **Mesopotamian** - spoken by about 14 million people in Iraq, Iran and Syria
- **Najdi** - spoken in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan and Syria by about 10 million people

For a full list of all varieties of colloquial Arabic [click here](#) (format: Excel, 20K).

Source: www.ethnologue.com

Sample Arabic text

يولد جميع الناس أحراراً متساوين في الكرامة والحقوق. وقد وهبوا عقلاً وضميراً وعليهم أن يعامل بعضهم بعضاً بروح الإخاء.

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