

# Arabic Letters and Diacritics

*A guide to basic Arabic Reading*



Champolu

# Section 1

## Learning Alphabet

# **Arabic Alphabet Letters**

خ

khaa2

ح

7aa2

ج

jeem

ث

thaa2

ت

taa2

ب

baa2

أ

alif

ص

ssaad

ش

sheen

س

seen

ز

zaay

ر

raa2

ذ

dhaal

د

daal

ق

qaaf

ف

faa2

غ

ghayn

ع

3ayn

ظ

dhaa2

ط

ttaa2

ض

ddaad

ي

yaa2

و

waaw

ه

haa2

ن

noon

م

meem

ل

laam

ك

kaaf

# **Letter Shapes and Examples**

alif - hamza and kasra

أ



إلى

'ila

to/towards

alif - madda

آ



آلة

aalah

machine

# Forms of 'alif

alif

ا

ابن



ebn

son

alif - hamza

أ



أنا

'ana

I (myself)

alif - hamza and damma

أ



أستاذ

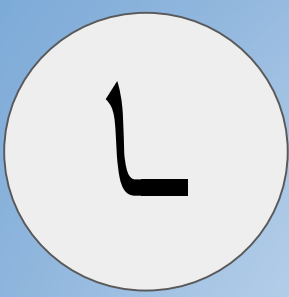
'ustaadh

teacher



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[champolu.com/arabic](http://champolu.com/arabic)



# Forms of 'alif



ناس



naas  
people


فأر



fa2r  
mouse


At the middle or the end of the word

امراة



emra2ah  
woman

أرنب



arnab  
rabbit

At the beginning of the word or separately




# Forms of 'alif




كلام  
kalaam  
speech/words

At the middle or the end of the word



لاما  
laama  
Llama




At the beginning of the word or separately

When the letter laam comes before alif, it forms the shape called **laam-alif**  
This applies also to different forms of alif  
لا- لآ- لآ



# Forms of 'alif




موسيقى  
mooseeqaa  
music



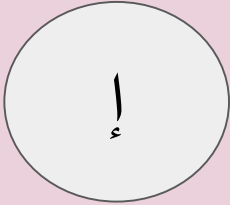
مستشفى  
mostashfaa  
hospital

A letter with the same sound of alif is called **alif-layyegah**  
It always comes at the end of words

# Forms of 'alif

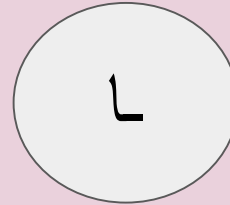


اِ

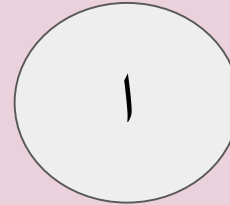


اِ

alif +  
hamzah +  
kasrah

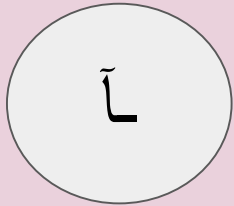


ا

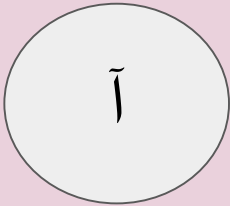


ا

alif

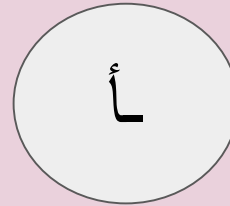


آ

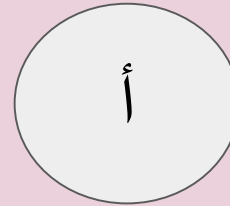


آ

alif +  
maddah

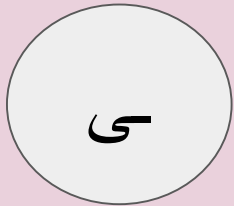


أ

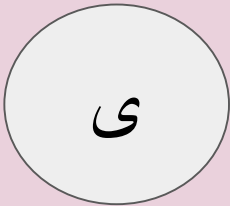


أ

alif +  
hamzah

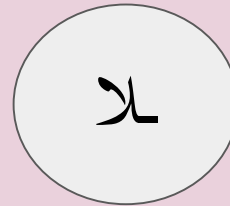


ي

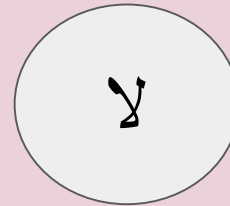


ي

alif  
layyinah



لا



لا

laam  
alif

# Forms of baa2

ب

At the end of the word

سبب



sabab  
reason

ب

At the middle of the word

طبيب



tabeeb  
doctor

ب

At the beginning of the word

بطة



battah  
duck

ب

# Forms of baa2

پ - ب

A rare letter: paa' (baa' with three dots under, borrowed from Persian)  
It is sometimes used in writing foreign words with the /p/ sound

أوروپا  
uruppa  
Europe



پاریس  
paris  
Paris



# Forms of taa2

ت

At the end of the word

At the middle of the word

At the beginning of the word



بنت

bint  
girl



?

متى  
mataa  
when?



تاكسي

taksee  
taxi

ت

ت

ت

# Forms of taa2

ة - ت

The letter taa' marbootah is a form of taa' that comes at the end of words  
It can be pronounced as /h/ if there is a pause after it, otherwise /t/



وردة  
wardah  
flower



كلمة  
kalimah  
word



If the letter before it has **no** different middle shape

If the letter before it has a different middle shape

# Forms of thaa2

ث

At the end of the word

At the middle of the word

At the beginning of the word



مثالت

muthallath  
triangle

كثير

katheer  
much



ثعبان

thu3abaan  
snake

ث

ث

ث

ب ب ب ب

baa2

ت ت ت ت

taa2

ة ه

taa2 marbootah

ث ث ث ث

thaa2



# Forms of jeem

ج

At the end of the word

ثلج



thalj

ice/snow

ج

At the middle of the word

شجرة



shajarah

tree

ج

At the beginning of the word

جميل

jameel

beautiful

ج

# Forms of 7aa2

ح


At the end of the word



بلح  
bala7  
dates

ح

At the middle of the word



بحر  
ba7r  
sea

ح

At the beginning of the word

حلم  
7olm  
dream

ح

# Forms of khaa2

خ

At the end of the word

تاريخ

tareekh  
history

خ

At the middle of the word

صخرة



sakhrakh  
rock

خ

At the beginning of the word

خبير

khabeer  
expert

خ

ج

ب

ب

ج

jeem

ح

ب

ب

ح

7aa2

خ

ب

خ

خ

khaa2

# Forms of daal

د

At the middle or end of the word

مدیر



modeer  
manager

د

At the beginning of the word

دائرة

daa2irah  
circle

د

# Forms of dhaal

ذ

At the middle or end of the word

لذيد



ladheedh

delicious

ذ

At the beginning of the word

ذكي

dhakeyy

intelligent

ذ

# Forms of raa2

ر

At the middle or end of the word

كريم

kareem  
generous

ر

At the beginning of the word

رجل



rajul  
man

ر

# Forms of zaay

ز

At the middle or end of the word

 نزاع  
nezaa3  
conflict

ز

At the beginning of the word

 زيتون  
zaytoon  
olive

ز



د

د

daal

ذ

ذ

dhaal

ر

ر

raa2

ز

ز

zaay

# Forms of seen

س

At the end of the word

أمس

ams

yesterday

س

At the middle of the word

عسل



3asal

honey

س

At the beginning of the word

سعيد



sa3eed

happy

س

# Forms of sheen

ش

At the end of the word

وحش



wa7sh  
monster

ش

At the middle of the word

مشكلة

mushkilah  
problem

ش

At the beginning of the word

شكراً

shukran  
thanks

ش

# Forms of ssaad

ص

At the end of the word



شخص

shakhs  
person

ص

At the middle of the word



بصل

basal  
onion

ص

At the beginning of the word

صديق

sadeeq  
friend

ص

# Forms of ddaad

ض

At the end of the word

At the middle of the word

At the beginning of the word



بيض

bayd  
eggs



فضاء

fadaa2  
space



ضوء

daw2  
light

ض

ض

ض

س

س

س

س

seen

ش

ش

ش

ش

sheen

ص

ص

ص

ص

ssaad

ض

ض

ض

ض

ddaad

# Forms of ttaa2

ط

At the end of the word

فقط

faqat  
only

ط

At the middle of the word

بطل



batal  
hero

ط

At the beginning of the word

طريق

tareeq  
road

ط

# Forms of dhaa2

ظ

At the end of the word



حظ

hadh  
luck

ظ

At the middle of the word

عظيم

3adheem  
great

ظ

At the beginning of the word

ظريف

dhareef  
funny

ظ



# Forms of 3ayn

ع

At the end of the word

واسع

waase3

wide

ع

At the middle of the word

معلومات

ma3loomaat

information

ع

At the beginning of the word

عين



3ayn

eye

ع

# Forms of ghayn

غ

At the end of the word

صمغ  
samgh  
glue

غ

At the middle of the word

لغة  
lughah  
language

غ

At the beginning of the word

غني  
ghaneyy  
rich

غ

ط

ط

ط

ط

ttaa2

ظ

ظ

ظ

ظ

dhaa2

ع

ع

ع

ع

3ayn

غ

غ

غ

غ

ghayn

# Forms of faa2

ف

At the end of the word

عنف

3unf

violence

ف

At the middle of the word



سفينة

safeenah

ship

ف

At the beginning of the word

فريق

fareeq

team

ف

# Forms of qaaf

ق

At the end of the word

ضيق

dayyeq

narrow/tight

ق

At the middle of the word

نقطة

noqtah

point/dot

ق

At the beginning of the word

قريب

qareeb

near

ق

# Forms of kaaf

ك

At the end of the word

سماك



samak

fish

ك

At the middle of the word

مكتب

maktab

office/desk

ك

At the beginning of the word

كسول



kasool

lazy

ك

# Forms of laam

ل

At the end of the word

عمل  
3amal  
work

ل

At the middle of the word

ملح  
me7  
salt



ل

At the beginning of the word

لعبة  
lo3abah  
toy/game



ل

ف

فا

فاا

فااا

faa2

ق

قا

قاا

قااا

qaaf

ك

كا

كاا

كااا

kaaf

ل

لا

لاا

لااا

laam



# Forms of meem

م

At the end of the word

At the middle of the word

At the beginning of the word



ألم

alam

pain



ليمون

laymoon

lemon

مكان

makaan

place

م

م

م

# Forms of noon

ن

At the end of the word



لبن  
laban  
milk

ن

At the middle of the word



مبنى  
mabnaa  
building

ن

At the beginning of the word

نحن  
nahnu  
we

ن

# Forms of haa2

ه

At the end of the word

وجه  
wajh  
face

ه

At the middle of the word

سهل  
sahl  
easy

ه

At the beginning of the word

هنا  
hunaa  
here

ه

م

م

م

م

meem

ن

ن

ن

ن

noon

ه

ه

ه

ه

haa2

# Forms of waaw

و

At the middle or end of the word

عفو

3afw

forgiveness

و

At the beginning of the word

ولد



walad

boy

و

# Forms of yaa2

ي

At the end of the word

نقي

naqeyy  
pure

ي

At the middle of the word

جيد

jayyed  
good

ي

At the beginning of the word

يوم

yawm  
day

ي

# Forms of hamzah ء

At the end

صحراء  
sahraa2  
desert



At the middle

قراءة  
qiraa2ah  
reading

Hamza is a glottal stop (similar to the sound in uh-oh)

# Forms of hamzah ء

With yaa2

شَيْءٌ  
shay2  
thing

ئ

With waaw

بُؤْسٌ  
bo2s  
misery

ؤ

With alif

فَأْرٌ  
fa2r  
mouse

أ

It can be combined with alif, waaw or yaa2



# Forms of hamzah ء

At the end

سيء  
sayye2  
bad

ء

Separately

ء

At the middle

فئران  
fe2raan  
mice

ء

With yaa2, it is sometimes called “hamzah 3ala nabrah”

و

و

waaw

ي

ا

ا

ي

yaa2

ي

ا

ئ

ؤ

ء

hamzah

# Section 2

## Learning Diacritics

## Arabic diacritics (short vowels)

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

أَكَلَ

akl

Food

أَكَلَ

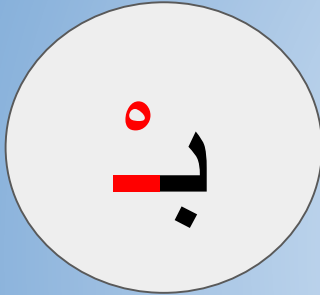
akal

He ate

Even with the same letters, words can be pronounced differently, because of diacritics/short vowels

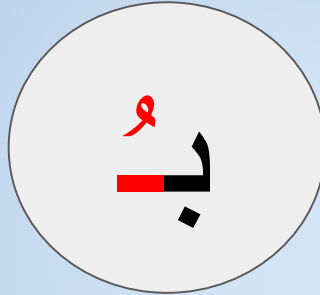
# Arabic diacritics (short vowels)

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel



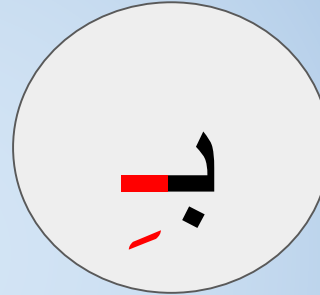
سُكُون  
**sukoon**

no vowel



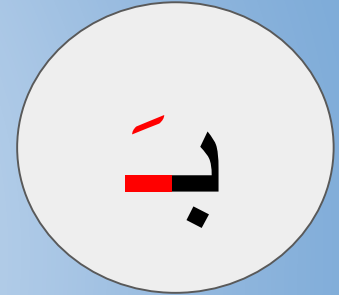
ضَمَّة  
**dammah**

short “o” or “u”  
vowel



كَسْرَة  
**kasrah**

short “e” or “i”  
vowel



فَتْحَة  
**fat-hah**

short “a” vowel

The main Arabic diacritics are short vowels, which are optionally written on letters.  
They include also sokoon, meaning no vowel, which is less frequently used.

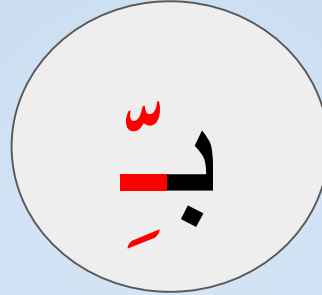
التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

shaddah

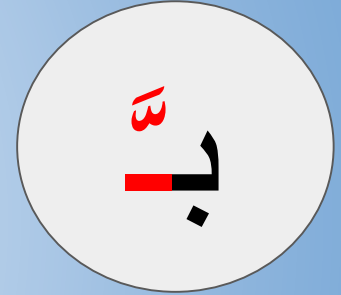
شَدَّة



shaddah with  
dammah



shaddah with  
kasrah



shaddah with fat-  
hah

Shaddah is the doubling of the sound of any letter  
It can be combined with either fat-hah, kasrah, or dammah

# Letters with diacritics

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

أ - alif

إِبْرَة  
 2ebrah  
needle

رَأْي  
ra2y  
opinion

أَسَد  
 asad  
lion

أُسْتَاذ  
ustaadh  
teacher



التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ب - baa2



بُرْج

burj

tower



بِنْت

bint

girl

بَلَد

balad

country



صَبَّار

sabbaar

cactus

قَبْل

qabl

before

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ت - taa2

تُفَّاح



toffaa7

apples

تِكْرَار

tekraar

repetition

تَرْجَمَة

tarjamah

translation

فَتَّاحَة

fattaa7ah

opener

قَتْل

qatl

murder

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

ث - thaa2

 ثُعْبَان

tho3abaan  
snake

ثِقَّة

thiqah  
confidence



ثَلْج

thalj  
ice/snow

مَثَال

mathhaal  
sculptor

مِثْل

methl  
such as

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ج - jeem

جُزُر

jozor  
islands

جِيرَان

jeeraan  
neighbors

جَيْش

jaysh  
army

سَجَّان

sajjaan  
warden

سِجْن

sejn  
prison

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

ح - 7aa2

حُبّ



7ubb

love

حِمَايَة

7imaayah

protection

حَرْف

7arf

letter

نَحَّال

na77aal

beekeeper

تَحْرِير

ta7reer

liberation

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

خ - khaa2

خُطَّة

khottah  
plan

خِبْرَة

khebrah  
experience



خَرُوف

kharooof  
sheep

مُدَخِّن

modakhkhen  
smoker

أَخْبَار

akhbaar  
news

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

د - daal

دُنْيَا

dunya  
world

دِفَاع

difaa3  
defense



دَمّ

damm  
blood

مُدَّة

moddah  
period



مَدْرَسَة

madrasah  
school

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ذ - dhaal



ذُبَابَةٌ

dhobaabah

fly

ذِرَاعٌ

dheraa3

arm

ذَكِيٌّ

dhaakee

intelligent



كَذَّابٌ

kadhdhaab

liar

عُذْرٌ

3udhr

excuse



التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ر - raa2

رُبَّمَا

robbamaa  
perhaps



رِيَاضَة

reyaadah  
sport

رَدٌّ

radd  
response

مَرَّة

marrah  
once

قَرْن

qarn  
century/horn

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ز - zaay



زُبْد

zobd

butter

زَرَّ

zerr

button



زَرَافَة

zaraafah

giraffe



إَوْزَة

ewazzah

goose

وَزْن

wazn

weight

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

seen - س



سُمّ

summ

poison

سِرّ

sirr

secret

سَدّ

sadd

dam



خَسّ

khass

lettuce

مُسْلِم

muslim

muslim

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ش - sheen

شُكْرًا

shukran  
thanks

شِهَادَة

shihaadah  
certificate

شَهْر

shahr  
month

قَشَّ

qashsh  
hay

مُشْكَلَة

moshkilah  
problem

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

ص - ssaad

صِرَافَةٌ

siraafah

money  
exchange

صَمَتْ

samt

silence

صُعُوبَةٌ

so3oobah

difficulty

لِصِّ

less

thief

أَصْلٌ

asl

origin

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

ddaad - ض

 ضُفْدَاع

dufdaa3

frog

ضِيَاْفَة

diyaafah

hospitality

ضَرَبِيَّة

dareebah

tax

فِضَّة

feddah

silver

هَضْم

hadm

digestion

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ط - ttaa2

طُرُق

turuq

roads

طِبَاعَة

tebaa3ah

printing

طَرِيق

tareeq

road



بَطَّة

battah

duck

قُطْن

qotn

cotton

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ظ - dhaa2

ظُلْم

dhulm

injustice

ظِلّ

dhill

shadow

ظَرِيف

dhareef

funny



حَظّ

hadhdh

luck

حَظْر

hadhr

prohibition



التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ع - 3ayn

عُنْف

3unf

violence

عِلَاقَة

3ilaaqah

relationship

عَادِي

3aadee

normal

فَعَّال

fa33aal

effective

بَعْد

ba3d

after

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

غ - ghayn

 غُصْن

ghosn  
branch

غَشَّ

gheshsh  
cheating

غَرِيب

ghareeb  
strange

مُصَغَّر

mosaghghar  
miniature

مَغْرُور

maghroor  
arrogant

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ف - faa2



فُسْتَان

fustaan

dress



فِكْرَة

fikrah

idea



فَنَّ

fann

art

شَفَّاف

shaffaaf

transparent



قِفْل

qifl

lock

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ق - qaaf



قُبْلَة

qublah

kiss



قِرْد

qird

monkey

قَرِيب

qareeb

near

مُعَقَّد

mu3aqqad  
complicated



عَقْل

3aql  
brain

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ك - kaaf



كُوب

koob

cup

كِتَابَة

kitaabah

writing

كَرِيم

kareem

generous

سُكَّر

sokkar

sugar

مَكْتَب

maktab

office/desk

التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

laam - ل



لُعْبَة

lo3abah  
game



لِسَان

lisaan  
tongue



لَبَن

laban  
milk

مُمِلّ

mumill  
boring



مَلْعَب

mal3ab  
playground

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

م - meem

مُنَاسِب

munaasib  
suitable



مِرْآة

mir2aah  
mirror



مَرِيض

mareed  
sick

مُهِيْم

muhimm  
important

أَمْن

amn  
security

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

noon - ن

 نُقُود

noqood  
money

نِسْيَان

nesyaan  
forgetting

نَصِيحَة

nasee7ah  
advice



بِنَاء

bannaa2  
builder

أَنْتَ

anta  
you (m)



التشكيل - الحركات

harakaat - tashkeel

ه - haa2

هُنَا

hunaa

here

هِيَ

hiya

she

هَادِيءٌ

haade2

calm

مُؤَهَّلٌ

mo2ahhel

qualification

سَهْلٌ

sahl

easy

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

و - waaw

وُصُول

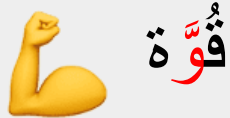
wu<sup>u</sup>sool  
arrival

وِكَالَة

wi<sup>i</sup>kaalah  
agency



وَرْدَة  
wardah  
flower



قُوَّة  
qu<sup>u</sup>wah  
strength

مَوْرِد

ma<sup>w</sup>red  
resource

التشكيل - الحركات  
harakaat - tashkeel

ي - yaa2

يُسْر

yusr  
ease

يَن

yinn  
Yenn

يَد

yadd  
hand

سَيِّد

sayyid  
master

سَيْف

sayf  
sword

# Bonus Lecture: Tanween

# Tanween التَّنْوِين

When an /n/ sound is added at the end of the word



أَسَدٌ

asad  
lion

—  
=

أَسَدٍ

asadin

=  
—

أَسَدًا

asadan

ء  
—

أَسَدٌ

asadun

# Tanween depends on the grammatical position of the word

## Tanween with dammah =

Applies by default, for words in subject position or separate



هَذَا كَلْبٌ

haadha kalbun

This is a dog

## Tanween with fat-hah =

Applies to words that are in the object position

وَجَدْتُ كَلْبًا

wajadtu kalaban

I found a dog

## Tanween with kasrah =

Applies to words that are after positions or similar

لَعِبْتُ مَعَ كَلْبٍ

la'ebtu ma3a kalbin

I played with a dog

Many common  
expressions have tanween

حَسَنًا

7asan**an**  
ok

عَفْوًا

3afw**an**  
You're welcome

شُكْرًا

shukr**an**  
Thanks

مَرْحَبًا

mar7ab**an**  
Welcome

أَهْلًا

ah**lan**  
Hello

قَرِيبًا

qareeb**an**  
soon

Words ending with taa' marbootah  
are pronounced with regular taa'  
with tanween



بَطَّة

battah  
duck

بَطَّاتٍ

battatin

بَطَّاتَانِ

battatan

بَطَّاتُونَ

battatun



# Section 3

## Main Prefixes and Suffixes

ال

(al-) alif laam



الكلب

al-kalb  
the dog

كلب

kalb  
a dog

The prefix alif laam (al-) represents the definite article in Arabic  
It is attached to the beginning of indefinite nouns

ال

(al-) alif laam



الْكَلْبُ الْكَبِيرُ

al-kalb al-kabeer

The big dog

كَلْبٌ كَبِيرٌ

kalb kabeer

a big dog

An adjective of a word with al- must also start with al-

و

waaw



كَلْبٌ وَجَمَلٌ

kalb **wa**-jamal

a dog **and** a camel

الْكَلْبُ وَالْجَمَلُ

al-kalb **wal**-jamal

the dog **and** the camel

The letter waaw is attached to the beginning of a word to mean “and”  
It can also be attached to the first word in a sentence to express continuation

ة - ة

taa' marbootah



مُدْرَسَة

modarressah

teacher (f)



مُدْرَس

modarress

teacher (m)

The letter taa' marbootah can be attached to the end of words to indicate a feminine noun

ة - ة

taa' marbootah

كَرِيمَةٌ

kareemah

generous (f)

كَرِيمٌ

kareem

generous (m)

The letter taa' marbootah can also be attached to adjectives to make feminine

Sounding it out

جُمْلَةٌ

جُ م لَ ه

جُ

م

لَ

ه

ju

m

la

h

jumlah = sentence



مَعْنَى

مَ عَنَّ ي

مَ

عَ

نَ

ي

ma

3

na

aa

ma3naa = meaning

عِلَاقَة

عِلَاقَة

ع

لَ

ا

قَ

ة

3i

la

aa

qa

h

3ilaaqah = relationship

العَرَبِيَّة

ا ل ع ر ب يَّ ة

ا

ل

ع

ر

ب

يَّ

ة

a

l

3a

ra

bi

yya

h

al-3arabiyyah = Arabic

مُمْتَاز

مُ مُمْتَا ز

مُ

مُم

مْتَا

ا

ز

mu

m

ta

aa

z

mumtaaz = excellent

جورج

ج و ر ج

ج

و

ر

ج

j

oo

r

j

joorj = George

كوريا

ك و ر ي ا

ك

و

ر

ي

ا

k

oo

r

y

aa

kooryaa = Korea

ديسمبر

د ي س م ب ر

د

ي

س

م

ب

ر

d

y

s

m

b

r

dysmbr = December

# End of Course Materials



خ

khā' /khaa2

ح

ḥā' /7aa2

ج

jīm /jeem

ث

thā' /thaa2

ت

tā' /taa2

ب

bā' /baa2

أ

'alif

ص

ṣād /ssaad

ش

shīn /sheen

س

sīn /seen

ز

zāy /zaay

ر

rā' /raa2

ذ

dhāl /dhaal

د

dāl /daal

ق

qāf /qaaf

ف

fā' /faa2

غ

ghayn

ع

'ayn /3ayn

ظ

zā' /dhaa2

ط

ṭā' /ttaa2

ض

ḍād /ddaad

ي

yā' /yaa2

و

wāw /waaw

ه

hā' /haa2

ن

nūn /noon

م

mīm /meem

ل

lām /laam

ك

kāf /kaaf