

Vowels

The Arabic alphabet comprises 28 letters, three of these letters (ا, ي, و) function as both consonants and long vowels each of which corresponds with three accent marks that function as short vowels (َ, ِ, ُ). Each one of the short and long vowels represents one of the main basic vowels in English (a, e, o). Short and long vowels represent the same vowel sound but differ only in the duration or the length of the vowel. Hence, the length of a long vowel is double the duration of that of a short vowel.

C represents a consonant

V represents a vowel

Short Vowels

Short vowels in Arabic are represented or indicated by three accent markers or “harakat/ تالكرح” which are placed above or under the letter or consonant rather than a letter vowel following it as in English (َ, ِ, ُ).



Fat’ha represents the short vowel “a” as in “cat”. It is written above the consonant.



Kas’rah represents the short vowel “i” as in “it” or the short vowel “e” as in “red”. It is written under the consonant.



Dommah represents the short vowel “u” as in “put” but never as in “cut”, and the short vowel “o” as in “corn” or “go”. It is written above the consonant. It looks like an English comma placed above the consonant.

Long Vowels

Long vowels in Arabic are represented or indicated by three letters (the first and the last two letters) of the alphabet (ا, ي, و).



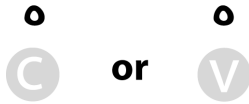
Aleph “ا” preceded by a **Fat’ha**, produces an elongated (in duration) “aa” sound as in “father” or “spa”.



Yaa “ي” preceded by a **Kas’rah**, produces a long “ii” sound as in “green,” “read,” or “brief”.

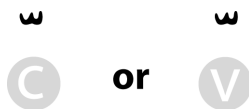


Waaw “و” preceded by a **Dommah**, produces a long “oo” sound as in “moon” or “u consonant e” as in “June”, but never as in “look” or “fun”.



Zero Vowel or Sukoon

When there is no short vowel after the consonant letter, it is marked by a small sign above it that looks like a small zero. It is called sukoon in Arabic (state of rest, or vowel less). When it is placed above a consonant, it indicates the absence of a following short vowel. Therefore, one should rest for a second at any consonant with a sukoon above it to mark the end of a syllable in a word, or the end of a sentence just like a “period”.



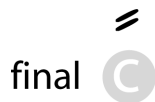
Doubled Consonants

It is called “shadda” in Arabic (to stress or strengthen). Hence, when placed above any Arabic consonant it causes it to be doubled in sound, not in letter, and as a result it will be stressed or prolonged in its pronunciation.

If the consonant is doubled as in “add”, it is never written twice in Arabic. Instead, it is marked by a “shadda” which looks like a small “w” above the consonant as in “عَدَّ-دَّعَّ”, (to count or put numbers together).

Indefiniteness / Tanween

In English, indefiniteness is expressed by either placing an ‘a’ or ‘an’ in front of a word. However, in Arabic indefiniteness is expressed by using the Tanween which adds the ending sound ‘an’, ‘en’ or ‘on’ to the end of a word. The adding of ‘an’, ‘en’ or ‘on’ depends upon the case of the word and its position in the sentence as follows:



Fat’hatan

Two fat’has are placed above the final letter of an indefinite noun in the objective or accusative cases. It adds the sound ‘an’ at the end of the word. Note: In English, words that begin with a vowel are preceded by the same sound, as in ‘an’ apple. In Arabic, ‘an’ is placed at the end of the word rather than in front.



Kas’ratan

Two kassrahs are placed under the last letter of an indefinite noun in the genitive case or in objects of a preposition. This adds the sound ‘en’ to the end of the word.



Domatan



Two dammahs are placed above the last letter of an indefinite noun in the nominative case.
It adds the sound ‘on’ to the end of the word.

<http://nolli.princeton.edu/faculty/arabic/index.html>

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