



Mini-lesson in Arabic

Arabic is a Semitic language and has a unique writing system that may be different from what new learners at LaGuardia Community College are accustomed to. Here are some fundamental aspects:

Direction of Writing: Arabic is written from right to left, which may feel counterintuitive for English speakers.

Alphabet: The Arabic alphabet consists of 28 letters. Many letters change their shape depending on their position in a word: initial, medial, final, or isolated.

No Capital Letters: Arabic does not have capital letters. Every letter often connects with the next letter in a word, which can affect their shape.

Vowels: Arabic uses diacritics (marks above or below the letters) to indicate short vowels and other pronunciation aids. However, these are typically omitted in everyday writing, except in religious texts or children's books.

ا	alif	a	ض	dad	d heavy
ب	ba	b	ط	ta	t heavy
ت	ta	t	ظ	za	z heavy
ث	tha	th as in <i>think</i>	ع	ain	a' guttural
ج	jim	j as in <i>jam</i>	غ	ghain	gh guttural
ح	ha	h heavy	ف	fa	f
خ	kha	kh as in <i>Bach</i>	ق	qaf	q deep
د	dal	d	ك	kaf	k
ذ	dhal	dh as in <i>this</i>	ل	lam	l
ر	ra	r rolled	م	mim	m
ز	zay	z	ن	nun	n
س	sin	s	ه	ha	h
ش	shin	sh	و	waw	oo as in <i>food</i>
ص	sad	s heavy	ي	ya	ee as in <i>see</i>

Below are some Arabic words using these Arabic characters. How do you pronounce them?

- (1) ديمقراطية "democracy"
- (2) موسيقى "music"
- (3) تلفاز "television"
- (4) تليفون "telephone"
- (5) راديو "radio"
- (6) كمبيوتر "computer"
- (7) ليل "night"
- (8) بنك "bank"
- (9) جامعة "university"
- (10) مكتبة "library"
- (11) طاقة "energy"
- (12) رياضة "sport"
- (13) مستشفى "hospital"
- (14) أصل "origin"
- (15) كهرباء "electricity"
- (16) فلسفة "philosophy"
- (17) مدرسة "school"
- (18) مواد كيميائية "chemicals"
- (19) نار "fire"
- (20) سيارة "car"
- (21) قانون "law"
- (22) بلدية "municipality"

To master the Arabic alphabet, new learners should focus on familiarizing themselves with each letter's forms (initial, medial, final, or isolated), practicing the direction of writing and reading, writing simple words and phrases repeatedly, and incorporating the use of short vowels (diacritics) to understand pronunciation better.

Where Can I Learn More at LaGuardia Community College

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