استوديو العربية
ARABIC-STUDIO.COM

Basic Arabic Grammar

Comprehensive Arabic Grammar for Beginners

Saqib Hussain

استوديوالعربية
ARABIC-STUDIO.COM

Basic Arabic Grammar

PART A

Saqib Hussain

Contents

Introduction

This is the first part of a series of four courses (*Basic Arabic Grammar: Parts A - D*). By the end of the fourth course students should be able to recognise almost all of the grammatical constructions in any Arabic text, and understand the text with the use of an appropriate dictionary.

This first part focuses on correctly forming basic nominal and verbal sentences. There are ten video lessons which accompany this textbook. Students will also need the accompanying Anki cards to derive maximum benefit from this course.

This grammar course assumes an understanding of the Arabic alphabet and vowel system, and the basic rules for reading and writing Arabic, as covered in the course *Reading and Writing the Arabic Script*.

It is suggested that students work through the ten chapters in this course in the following manner:
1. Read through each chapter;
2. Watch the video lesson for the chapter;
3. Re-read the chapter - you should now have a thorough understanding of the main grammar points covered;
4. Memorise the vocabulary for the chapter using the vocabulary lists and Anki (see the documents *Understanding the Vocabulary Lists* and *Using Anki* for how to set up Anki flashcards on your computer and smartphone);
5. Attempt all of the translation exercises in writing, check your answers in the Answer Key, and make sure you've understood any mistakes that you made;
6. As you work through the textbook, periodically review the translation exercises from prior chapters until you're able to complete them orally, without hesitation.

1 Definite and Indefinite Nouns, and the Nominal Sentence

A The Noun in Arabic

Arabic nouns are either *indefinite* or *definite*.

Indefinite nouns take a tanwīn on their final letter, and are generally translated into English using the word 'a':

a boy	وَلَدٌ
a book	كِتَابٌ
a man	رَجُلٌ

To make these nouns definite, we remove the tanwīn and fix the word اَلْ to the beginning of the word. This is generally translated using the word 'the':

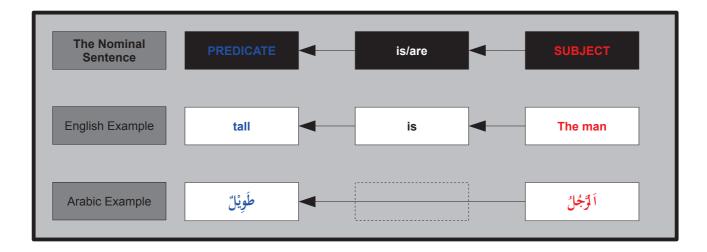|	
the boy	اَلْوَلَدُ
the book	اَلْكِتَابُ
the man	اَلرَّجُلُ

Unlike in English, adjectives in Arabic are also either definite or indefinite, just like the nouns. We'll come back to this point in the next chapter.

B The Nominal Sentence

The most basic sentence in Arabic is called the *nominal sentence*. This is of the form 'X is/are Y', such as 'The boy is tall', or 'The books are big.'

X is usually a definite noun, and is known as the *subject*. Y is usually an indefinite noun or an indefinite adjective, and is called the *predicate*.

This is illustrated below. Note that in Arabic we don't have a word for 'is/are' in the nominal sentence.

3

The Nominal Sentence	PREDICATE	←	is/are	←	SUBJECT
English Example	tall	←	is	←	The man
Arabic Example	طَوِيْلٌ	←	⸤⸥	←	اَلرَّجُلُ

Consider the following nominal sentences:

<div align="center">

The door is big   اَلْبَابُ كَبِيْرٌ

The man is a teacher   اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ

</div>

C The Singular Detached Pronouns

We can replace the subject of a nominal sentence with a *pronoun*. For example, rather than saying 'The man is tall', we might want to say, 'He is tall'. The Arabic pronouns we use for this replacement are called the *detached pronouns*.

Detached pronouns are fully covered in Chapter 8; only the singular forms are given here. Note there are different words for 'you' in Arabic for addressing a male and a female person. We'll differentiate in English by using *SRm* (singular masculine) and *SRf* (singular feminine) in subscript.

<div align="center">

English	Arabic
I	أَنَا[1]
you$_{SRm}$	أَنْتَ
you$_{SRf}$	أَنْتِ
he/it[2]	هُوَ
she/it	هِيَ

</div>

---

1 The ا of أَنَا is silent, so it is pronounced as if it were: أَنَ .

2 Note that there is no separate pronoun for 'it'. Instead, we just use هُوَ or هِيَ depending on whether the subject being referred to is masculine or feminine respectively (see Chapter 3).

Consider the following sentences:

You_{SRm} are tall	أَنْتَ طَوِيْلٌ
He is short	هُوَ قَصِيْرٌ
I am young	أَنَا صَغِيْرٌ

D Using 'And' in the Nominal Sentence

The word for 'and' in Arabic is وَ . Its use in the nominal sentence is very intuitive. Consider the following nominal sentences, each of which has more than one predicate (note that we write the وَ together with the following word, without a space between them):

The door is big and beautiful	اَلْبَابُ كَبِيْرٌ وَجَمِيْلٌ
The man is a teacher and a student	اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ وَطَالِبٌ
The street is long and wide	اَلشَّارِعُ طَوِيْلٌ وَوَاسِعٌ

'And' can also be used to link two nominal sentences together:

The sea is big and the river is small	اَلْبَحْرُ كَبِيْرٌ وَالنَّهْرُ صَغِيْرٌ
The man is a teacher and the boy is a student	اَلرَّجُلُ أُسْتَاذٌ وَالْوَلَدُ طَالِبٌ
The chair is old and the door is new	اَلْكُرْسِيُّ قَدِيْمٌ وَالْبَابُ جَدِيْدٌ

5

Vocabulary

English	Arabic
man | PL	رَجُلٌ | رِجَالٌ
boy, son | PL	وَلَدٌ | أَوْلادٌ
teacher | PL	أُسْتَاذٌ | أَسَاتِذَةٌ
student | 2PLS[3]	طَالِبٌ | طُلَّابٌ ، طَلَبَةٌ
river | PL	نَهْرٌ | أَنْهَارٌ
sea | 2PLS	بَحْرٌ | بِحَارٌ ، أَبْحُرٌ
book | PL	كِتَابٌ | كُتُبٌ
street | PL	شَارِعٌ | شَوَارِعُ[4]
chair | PL	كُرْسِيٌّ | كَرَاسِيُّ
door; chapter | PL	بَابٌ | أَبْوَابٌ
the Nile	اَلنِّيلُ
big, great | PL[5]	كَبِيرٌ | كِبَارٌ
small, young | PL	صَغِيرٌ | صِغَارٌ
old, ancient | PL	قَدِيمٌ | قُدَمَاءُ
new | 2PLS	جَدِيدٌ | جُدَدٌ ، جُدُدٌ
long, tall | PL	طَوِيلٌ | طِوَالٌ
short | PL	قَصِيرٌ | قِصَارٌ
beautiful, handsome | PL	جَمِيلٌ | جِمَالٌ

---

3 A single Arabic word may have a number of plurals. This is true of a few English words too (e.g. the plurals of *antenna* are *antennas* and *antennae*, the plurals of *fungus* are *fungi* and *funguses*), but is much more common in Arabic.

4 Notice that unlike most of the other words here, شَوَارِعُ doesn't have a tanwīn ending. Such words are called *diptotes*, and will be covered in *Basic Arabic Grammar: Part B*. For now, treat such words like any other, except that they **must never have a tanwīn ending**. You will also encounter other odd-looking plurals in the vocabulary lists (e.g. أَرَاضٍ in Chapter 3 and قُرًى in Chapter 10); these words should of course be learnt, but will be dealt with in *Basic Arabic Grammar: Part B*.

5 Many Arabic adjectives have plurals. This is needed for agreement between nouns and adjectives (see Chapter 7).

broken	مَكْسُوْرٌ
broad, wide	وَاسِعٌ

Translation Exercises

Exercise 1A

١   رَجُلٌ وَوَلَدٌ.

٢   اَلْأُسْتَاذُ وَالطَّالِبُ.

٣   اَلْأُسْتَاذُ جَدِيْدٌ.

٤   أَنَا طَوِيْلٌ.

٥   اَلنِّيْلُ قَدِيْمٌ.

٦   اَلنِّيْلُ نَهْرٌ.

٧   اَلْبَحْرُ كَبِيْرٌ.

٨   اَلْبَابُ قَدِيْمٌ وَمَكْسُوْرٌ.

٩   اَلْكِتَابُ قَدِيْمٌ وَجَمِيْلٌ.

١٠   اَلطَّالِبُ صَغِيْرٌ. هُوَ قَصِيْرٌ.

١١   اَلْكُرْسِيُّ طَوِيْلٌ. هُوَ جَمِيْلٌ.

١٢   اَلْوَلَدُ صَغِيْرٌ وَجَمِيْلٌ.

١٣   اَلْبَابُ كَبِيْرٌ وَوَاسِعٌ وَجَمِيْلٌ.

١٤   أَنْتَ رَجُلٌ وَأَنَا وَلَدٌ.

١٥   اَلشَّارِعُ جَدِيْدٌ وَقَصِيْرٌ وَالنَّهْرُ قَدِيْمٌ وَطَوِيْلٌ.

Exercise 1B

1. The river and the sea.
2. A book and a chair.
3. The street is long.
4. He is a boy.

7

5. The Nile is ancient.

6. I am a student and you_{SRm} are a teacher.

7. The door is tall.

8. The sea is small and beautiful.

9. The door is beautiful. It is big.

10. The boy is young and short.

11. The man is big and the boy is tall.

12. You_{SRm} are tall and he is short.

13. The chair is big, old and broken[6].

14. The teacher is tall and the student is short.

15. The book is small and new, and the chapter is short and beautiful.

---

6 This should be translated as if it were: 'The chair is big **and** old **and** broken.' As a general rule, in Arabic we use وَ
to separate items in a list like the three predicates in this example, where in English we would use commas.