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Part B

# Basic Arabic Grammar

Comprehensive Arabic Grammar for Beginners

Saqib Hussain



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ARABIC-STUDIO.COM

Course Code: TAS004B

# Basic Arabic Grammar

## PART B

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# Contents

	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Idāfah.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Attached Pronouns and Double-Sukūns.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Demonstrative Pronouns.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Relative Pronouns.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Determiners.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Irregular Nouns and their Declension.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>The Five Nouns.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>Collective Nouns and Mass Nouns.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>Questions.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Verbal Nouns.....</b>	<b>70</b>
	<b>Answer Key.....</b>	<b>76</b>

## Introduction

This is the second 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 second part focuses on nouns, pronouns and forming questions. 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 that students have completed *Basic Arabic Grammar: Part A*.

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.

## 11 Iḍāfah

### A The *apostrophe-s* construction and the *of*-construction

In English, we use the *apostrophe-s* construction and the *of*-construction to show possession<sup>1</sup>. Either of these constructions may be definite or indefinite:

DEFINITE POSSESSION	
<i>Apostrophe-s</i> construction	<i>of</i> -construction
the boy's dog	the dog of <i>the</i> boy
the king's son	the son of <i>the</i> king

INDEFINITE POSSESSION	
<i>Apostrophe-s</i> construction	<i>of</i> -construction
a boy's dog	the dog of <i>a</i> boy
a king's son	the son of <i>a</i> king

We translate definite possession into Arabic using the *definite iḍāfah*, and indefinite possession using the *indefinite iḍāfah*.

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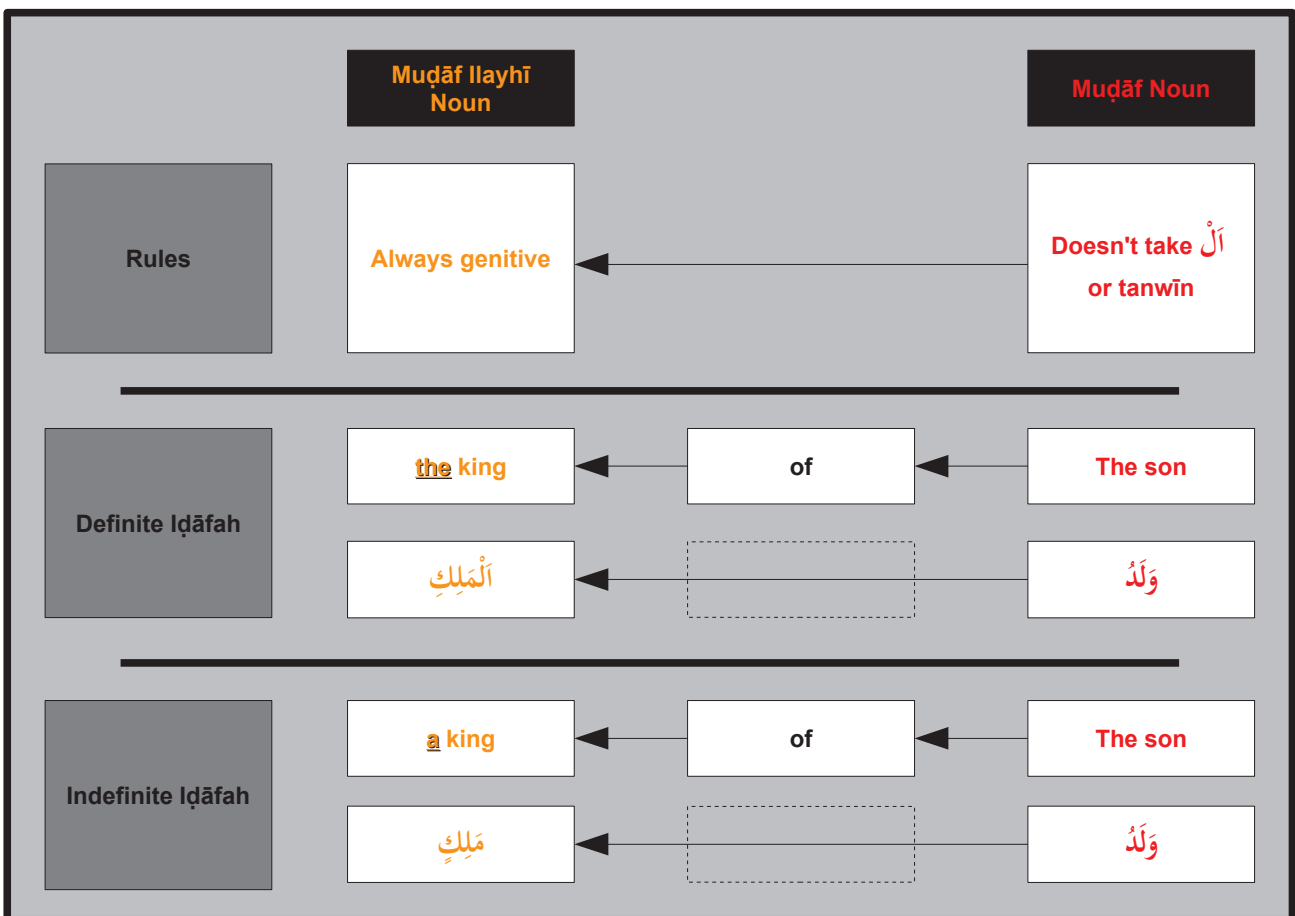
<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that both the *apostrophe-s* and the *of*- constructions in English, and the *iḍāfah* construction in Arabic, are actually used for more than just possession, e.g. *the baby's birth*. However, 'possession' is a useful starting point when considering these constructions.

## B Forming the Iḍāfah

Here are the rules for forming the iḍāfah construction:

1. The two nouns are placed next to each other in the order that they would appear in the English *of*-construction - the first noun is called the *mudāf*, and the second the *mudāf ilayhī*;
2. The mudāf noun mustn't take **أل** or tanwīn;
3. The mudāf ilayhī noun:
  - a. must be in the genitive case;
  - b. must be definite (usually<sup>2</sup> by giving it an **أل**) in a definite iḍāfah construction, and indefinite in an indefinite iḍāfah construction.

This is illustrated in the diagram below:



<sup>2</sup> Where the *mudāf ilayhī* is a proper noun, it is by definition definite, whether or not it takes an **أل** (see Basic Arabic Grammar - Part A, note 28), and so in such cases we always form a definite iḍāfah construction.

Note that whereas the *muḍāf ilayhī* noun is always genitive, the grammatical case of the *muḍāf* noun is determined by its position in the sentence.

Consider the example sentences for the definite idāfah below:

The son of the king is dead

وَلَدُ الْمَلِكِ مَيِّتٌ

I killed the son of the king

قَتَلْتُ وَدَّ الْمَلِكِ

I looked at the son of the king

نَظَرْتُ إِلَى وَدِّ الْمَلِكِ

Note how these change when we use the indefinite idāfah:

He is the son of a king

هُوَ وَدٌّ مَلِكٍ

I killed the son of a king

قَتَلْتُ وَدَّ مَلِكٍ

I looked at the son of a king

نَظَرْتُ إِلَى وَدِّ مَلِكٍ

## C Adjectives and the Idāfah

As a general rule, nothing is allowed to come between the *muḍāf* and the *muḍāf ilayhī* nouns in the idāfah construction. Therefore, if we want to give *either* of them an adjective, it has to come immediately after the construction.

Note that in the definite idāfah construction, both the *muḍāf* and the *muḍāf ilayhī* nouns are considered definite, and similarly in the indefinite idāfah construction both nouns are considered indefinite - this must be borne in mind for purposes of adjectival agreement.

Consider the example sentences for the definite idāfah below:

The small boy's dog /  
The dog of the small boy

كَلْبُ الْوَلَدِ الصَّغِيرِ

The boy's small dog /  
The small dog of the boy

كَلْبُ الْوَلَدِ الصَّغِيرِ

I killed the **small girl's** dog /  
I killed the dog of the **small girl**

قَتَلْتُ كَلْبَ الْبِنْتِ الصَّغِيرَةِ

I looked at the two merchants' **big camels** /  
I looked at the **big camels** of the two merchants

نَظَرْتُ إِلَى جَمَالِ التَّاجِرَيْنِ الْكَبِيرَةِ

Again, note how these change when we use the indefinite idāfah:

A **small boy's** dog /  
The dog of a **small boy**

كَلْبُ وَلَدٍ صَغِيرٍ

A boy's **small dog** /  
The **small dog** of a boy

كَلْبٌ وَوَلَدٍ صَغِيرٍ

I killed a **small girl's** dog /  
I killed the dog of a **small girl**

قَتَلْتُ كَلْبَ بِنْتٍ صَغِيرَةٍ

## D The Dual and the SMP in Idāfah

Dual and SMP nouns lose their final ن if they are muḍāf in an idāfah construction. Consider the examples below:

Non-Muḍāf Dual Noun	Dual Noun as Muḍāf
The <b>two sons</b> اَلْوَلَدَانِ	The <b>two sons</b> of the king      وَلَدَا الْمَلِكِ
They are the <b>two good daughters</b> هُمَا الْبِنَتَانِ الْحَسَنَتَانِ	They are the <b>two good daughters</b> of the queen      هُمَا بِنَتَا الْمَلِكَةِ الْحَسَنَتَانِ
I killed the <b>two small dogs</b> قَتَلْتُ الْكَلْبَيْنِ الصَّغِيرَيْنِ	I killed the boy's <b>two small dogs</b> / I killed the <b>two small dog's</b> of the boy <sup>3</sup> قَتَلْتُ كَلْبِي الْوَلَدِ الصَّغِيرَيْنِ
I know the <b>two names</b> أَعْرِفُ الْإِسْمَيْنِ	I know the <b>names</b> of two small villages      أَعْرِفُ اسْمَي قَرْيَتَيْنِ صَغِيرَتَيْنِ

3 We put a kasrah on the ي of كَلْبِي to avoid a double-sukūn (see Chapter 12, Section C).



## E Iḍāfah Chains

When we have a series of *apostrophe-s* or *of*-constructions, such as 'the boy's dog's name' (or 'the name of the dog of the boy'), an iḍāfah chain is formed. In this case:

- the *first noun* in the series is a *muḍāf* noun, so follows the rules for muḍāf nouns;
- the *final noun* in the series is a *muḍāf ilayhī* noun, so follows the rules for muḍāf ilayhī nouns;
- the *nouns in the middle* of the chain are *both muḍāf* and *muḍāf ilayhī*, so follow the rules for both:
  - they don't take اَلْ ;
  - they don't take tanwīn;
  - if they're dual or SMP nouns, they lose their final ن ;
  - they're all genitive.

Consider the examples below, in which the nouns in the middle of the iḍāfah chain are highlighted:

The name of **the son** of the king

إِسْمُ وُلْدِ الْمَلِكِ

I know the names of Iraq's **cities**

أَعْرِفُ أَسْمَاءَ مَدُنِ الْعِرَاقِ

He is the son of a big country's **ambassador**

هُوَ وُلْدُ سَفِيرِ بَلَدٍ كَبِيرٍ

## F The Oblique Genitive

Look again at Sections A and B: the English equivalent of the muḍāf noun, in *both* the definite and the indefinite *of*-constructions, takes the definite article! For example, we have '*the* son of the king' (definite iḍāfah), and '*the* son of a king' (indefinite iḍāfah).

If we have an *of*-construction in English with an indefinite noun before the *of*, e.g. '*a* friend of the king's', we can't translate using the iḍāfah construction. Instead, we form a prepositional phrase 'of the king' using the preposition لَ .

In English grammar this is called the *oblique genitive*. Note that in English the word after *of* in the

oblique genitive takes an *apostrophe-s* ending.

Note also that such constructions can often be rephrased in English using the phrase 'one of the...',  
e.g. 'one of the king's friends'.

It is a sword **of the prince's** /  
It is one of the prince's swords  
I entered a house **of the merchant's** /  
I entered one of the merchant's houses

هُوَ سَيْفٌ لِلْأَمِيرِ

دَخَلْتُ بَيْتًا لِلتَّاجِرِ

I looked at a book **of the man's** /  
I looked at one of the man's books

نَظَرْتُ إِلَى كِتَابٍ لِلرَّجُلِ

## Vocabulary

butcher   PL	جَزَّارٌ   جَزَّارُونَ
name   PL	إِسْمٌ   أَسْمَاءٌ
sister   PL	أُخْتٌ   أَخَوَاتٌ <sup>4</sup>
colour   PL	لَوْنٌ   أَلْوَانٌ
camel   PL	جَمَلٌ   جِمَالٌ
desert [f.]   PL	صَحْرَاءٌ   صَحْرَاةٌ
beggar   PL	سَائِلٌ   سَوَّالٌ
the North	الشَّمَالُ
the East	الشَّرْقُ
the South	الجَنُوبُ
the West	العَرَبُ
ignorant   PL	جَاهِلٌ   جُهَّالٌ
lazy   PL	كُسْلَانٌ   كُسَالَى
patient	صَابِرٌ
better (than)	حَيْرٌ (مِنْ)
worse (than)	شَرٌّ (مِنْ)
to stop, stand up   VN	وَقَفَ (يَقِفُ)   وَتُوفَاً
to live (in)   VN	سَكَنَ [ـ] (فِي)   سَكُونًا
last night	الْبَارِحَةَ
at once	حَالًا

4 This is a Sound Feminine Plural.

## Translation Exercises

### Exercise 11A

- ١ أَخَذَ الْجَزَائِرُ سَكِينَةَ الطَّبَّاحِ النَّظِيفَةِ مِنَ الْمَطْبُخِ.
- ٢ لَا أَعْرِفُ اسْمَ قَرْيَةِ الْحَادِمِ.
- ٣ ضَحِكَ الْحَادِمُ الذَّكِيُّ مِنْ أُخْتِ الْمَلِكِ الْعَيْبَةِ.
- ٤ بَحَثَ الْأَبُ فِي لَوْنِ حَيْطَانِ الدُّكَّانِ الْوَسِيخِ مَعَ الْأُمِّ .
- ٥ قَتَلُوا أَحْصِنَةَ الْعَدُوِّ الْقَوِيَّةِ.
- ٦ صَحْرَاءُ الْعِرَاقِ وَاسِعَةٌ وَحَارَّةٌ .
- ٧ شَكَرَ السَّائِلَانِ الصَّابِرَانِ نِسَاءَ الْقَصْرِ الْعَيْنِيَّاتِ عَلَى الْخُبْزِ وَالْمَاءِ .
- ٨ فِي شَرْقِ الْبَلَدِ نَهْرَانِ جَمِيلَانِ.
- ٩ تَرَكَ السَّفِينُ الْجَاهِلُ كِتَابَ الْأُسْتَاذِ الصَّعْبِ فِي الْبُسْتَانِ أَمْسٍ.
- ١٠ مَا دَرَسَتْ ابْنَتَا الْإِمَامِ الْكَسْلَانَتَانِ الْبَارِحَةَ .
- ١١ سَيْفُ الْأَمِيرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ سَيْفِ الْمَلِكِ. هُوَ خَفِيفٌ وَشَدِيدٌ.
- ١٢ لَا يَفْهَمُ الطَّبِيبُ تَجَارِبَ الْجَامِعَةِ.
- ١٣ وَقَفَتْ ابْنَتَا الْمَلِكِ الصَّغِيرَتَانِ وَنَظَرَتَا إِلَى السَّاعَةِ عَلَى الْحَائِطِ.
- ١٤ يَحْسَبُ الْأُسُفُفُ النَّاسَ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ.
- ١٥ أَسْكُنُ فِي الْعِرَاقِ الْآنَ.

### Exercise 11B

1. Muhammad's two donkeys are on the mountain.
2. The Imam lives in a small house close to the city's big mosque.
3. The princess's eyes are big and beautiful.
4. The pen of a clever enemy is worse than the sword.
5. The school's lazy students are absent today.
6. The two doctors are slow, ignorant and stupid.
7. The caliph's army is in the North and the enemy's army is in the South.

8. The two poor, sad beggars returned to the dirty, narrow streets of the city and became angry with the rich sultan.
9. The Prophet of God left the city with an upright, trustworthy friend at once, and they rode two camels to the desert.
10. The merchant's two camels are weak and ill.
11. She considered the colour of the sultan's new, fast, precious car (to be) ugly.
12. The Shaykh's patient sister carried the heavy books from the two small rooms of the library to the office.
13. The name of the tall, handsome man is Muhammad.
14. We asked the two young soldiers about the famous commander of the Muslims.
15. The butchers went to the old city's markets and returned with the animals.

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