



Memorising the Arabic alphabet the easy way

Step 1: Visualising Arabic letters


Here are your first 16 Arabic letters to learn. Try to remember them as images like this:















“A” is the first letter of the alphabet – it looks like a 1 (one).

“B” looks like a boat with a keel below.

“F” looks like a boat with a fisherman sitting at the rear travelling left, etc.

Make sure you can visualise them all before going on to Step 2.

Sound	Arabic letter	Visualisation to aid your memory
A	ا	The Arabic ‘A’ looks like a ‘1’(one) which will help you to remember it is the first letter of the alphabet.
B	ب	‘B’ looks very much like a boat with the keel hanging below.
F	ف	‘F’ is a ‘fishing boat with a fisherman sitting at the rear’. Notice he is travelling from right to left, the same direction as Arabic writing!
T	ت	‘T’ is a ‘boat with two passengers in the form of dots’. Two = T. It also looks like a ‘Toad’ (Two eyes and a big mouth).
Th	ث	Now the boat has ‘ three ’ passengers. (Three dots remind us that the sound is ‘th’.)
N	ن	‘N’ looks like a bulbous nose. 
M	م	‘M’ has two versions. One looks like an ‘O’ and one like a ‘P’ (The tail goes off to the left or drops. So to remind

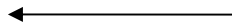
		yourself, think of the word: M.O.P: 
L		'L' is easy – just turn it to face Left.
ee, y, i	 	This looks a bit like an 'S' with a long tail and two dots below. Imagine the dots are 'e's. So the 'S' + 'ee' spells 'See'. Just remember the two 'ee's. When writing, sometimes the squiggle is left off:  It also takes the 'y' sound as in 'yacht'.
D		Looks like an open D. 
r		Is rounded and is rolling to the right
s		Looks like a curled up snake 
oo or w		Looks like a 9. Imagine 9 cookies and 9 Waffles.
g		This does look somewhat like a g with a difference. And the sound is different. It's a bit like gargling!
t		Looks like a turtle on the move.
k		K as in kettle. The 's' shape in the middle reminds of steam coming out of the kettle!

Step 2: Spelling

Now for a bit of fun, let's spell some English words using Arabic letters.

The purpose of this exercise is to work with the letters, to anchor them into your memory. Try writing them, too. **Arabic is written from right to left.** I repeat:

**.left to right from written is Arabic
.to used getting some takes This**



Below on the left you can see the printed letters and next to them on the right, the hand-written version:

1.

م + ا + ن = man
←
م + ا + ن

2.

ث + ي + ن = thin
←
ث + ي + ن
←
.tfel ot thgir morf etirw ot rebmemeR

3.

ف + ا + ن = f**
←
ف + ا + ن

4.

ب + م + ا + ن = l**b
←
ب + م + ا + ن

5.

د + ي + م

م + ي + د = d*m

6.

م + ا + ث

م + ا + ث

= m*th

7. ←

د + ي + ل + ل

د + ي + ل + ل

= di**

8.

م + ي + ل + ل

م + ي + ل + ل

= *ill

9. ←

ب + ي + ت

= *** (Clue: a small piece!)

10.

ب + ا + ت

= *** (Clue: sports implement)

11.

ف + ا + ت

= *** (No clue, sorry!)

Now lets get reading some real Arabic words. For the sake of familiarity, lets take the months. (earworms Rapid Arabic Vol 2.)

The months

yanayir يـنـاـيـر, febrayir فـبـرـاـيـر, maris مـاـرـس, abreel أـبـرـيـل, mahyoo مـاـيـو,
yunioo يـوـنـيـو, yulioo يـوـلـيـو, agoostoos اـغـسـطـس, sibtemberr (role the 'r')
ديسمبر, aooktoober أـوـكـتـوـبـر, noofember نـوـفـمـبـر, disember ديسمبر

yaneyir = يـنـاـيـر

Let's look at the word 'yanayir' under the microscope:

يـنـاـيـر

Do you recognise all the letters? No?

Apart from being written from right to left, the second hurdle is that when written together in one word, letters often lose their tails and flourishes.

Let's do an experiment to try to separate the letters. You can try this yourself in a text programme like Word. (See Doc. Arabic months)

يـنـاـيـر

1. Going from right to left putting a space between the first and

second letter, ي separates itself so we have:

ي نـاـيـر

2. Separating the second letter gives us:

ي ن اـيـر

3. Separating the third:

ي ن ا يـر

4. until all letters are separate:

ي ن ا ي ر

5. Reading from the right you can now read: y a n a y i r

Notice the 'a' after the first y and the 'i' after the second y (here grey) are not actually written!. In most cases in Arabic the (short) vowels which are additional small symbols above and below the main letters are left out; you have to guess them. It's a bit like SMS texting e.g. "pls ring bck" (Please ring back)

Lets try the same with **febrayir**

فبراير

Separated:

ف ب ر ا ي ر
r y a r b f
←

you read: **f b r a y r**

Note here that you also have to interpolate the missing vowels (**f**e**bray**i**r**)

Maris = مارس

مارس

Separated:

م ا ر س
←
s r a m

you read: **m a r s** and have to guess the vowel 'i' after the 'r'.

Abreeel = أبريل

أبريل

Separated:

أ ب ر ي ل
←
l i r b A

By the way the little 'c' shaped symbol above the 'A' is called 'hamza'.

Mayoo = مايو

مايو
م ا ي و
oo y a M

Yunioo = يونيو

يونيو

As single letters:

ي و ن ي و
oo i n u y
←

yulioo يوليو

As single letters:

ي و ل ي و
oo i l u y
←

agooostoos اغسطس

As single letters:

ا غ س ط س
agooostoos
soo t soo g a (vowels are not written)
←

sibtemberr سبتمبر

As single letters:

س ب ت م ب ر
sibtemberr
r e b m t b i s (vowels are not written)
←

ooktoober أوكتوبر

As single letters:

ooktoober أ و ك ت و ب ر
r b oo t k oo a
←

noofember نوفمبر

As single letters:

noofember ن و ف م ب ر
reb mefoon
←

disember ديسمبر

As single letters:

disember د ي س م ب ر
reb mes i d

Here are the rest of the 28 letters. Try to think of more visualisations to aid your memory.

Sound	Arabic letter	Visualisation to aid your memory
sh	ش	
j	ج	
h	ح	
h	ه	
like the ch in lo ch	ح	
like the 'th' in 'there'	ث	
z	ز	
sā	س	
dā	ظ	

strong z	ظ	
Sounds a bit like saying , ahh ' when the doctor examines your throat.	ع	
q as in queen	ق	Looks like a queen with a crown on her head.