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A Perfect Ten

Learn Quranic Arabic
in 10 COLOURED TABLES

2nd Edition



A Perfect Ten: Learn Quranic Arabic in 10 Coloured Tables
2nd Edition, 2026

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Linguistics

Arabic is composed of 2, 3, and sometimes 4 letter words. Most words can be traced back to a 3-letter root, which is the basis for a family of words each with related meanings. Take the English word paint. It acts as a base for many other nouns (things), verbs (actions), and even adjectives (qualities) through a little manipulation, e.g. painter, painted, and painterly etc. The study of how words are adapted into different patterns like this to alter their meaning is called morphology. There are thousands of roots in Arabic that students can encounter during their study, though as with any language, some words and patterns are much more frequent than others, and should be memorised first to help understand the language faster.

An important difference between English and Arabic is in the way words are classified. Grammatically, Arabic words all fall into three categories: *ism* (nouns, adjectives, determiners, and adverbs), *fi'l* (verbs), and *harf* 'particles' (prepositions and conjunctions). Additionally to this, Arabic nouns and verbs will very often be combined with prefixes (at the beginning) that attach a preposition or conjunction, or suffixes (at the end) that expresses the word's relationship with a another object or person.

The following lessons - adapted by Torbay Islamic Centre from Linguistic Miracle - cover the vast majority of classical Arabic grammar rules, and are designed for those who already have a steady ability to read Arabic with vowel markings, though cannot understand it. By focusing on one lesson a day, taking in all the content (down to every detail) of the lesson table carefully, students should be able to grasp all the basic and intermediate rules of the language in less than two weeks. Each lesson gives learners a stronger and stronger feel for how the Arabic language works, making it easier to listen to and understand the Quran, Hadiths, and Arabic speech.

1. 3-Letter Words
2. 2-Letter Verbs
3. 1-Letter Prefixes
4. Past Tense Verbs
5. Present/Future Tense Verbs
6. Verb Forms
7. 3-Letter Word Summary
8. Possessive Pronouns
9. Dual/Plural Nouns
10. Verb Moods/Noun Cases

LESSON 1. 3-LETTER WORDS

Summary: Most words in Arabic are made up of 3 root letters. These words may be nouns (doers/ones done to), or verbs (actions). The 3 letters will have *taskīl* markings on them telling us if the word is a noun, a verb, or something else:

Table 1: 3-Letter Word Patterns

NOUNS	VERBS	ROOT
فَاعِل fā'il do<u>er</u>	فَعَلَ fa'al<u>a</u> <u>he</u> did	ف ع ل f ' l do
مَفْعُول maf'ūl <u>one</u> done <u>to</u>	يَفْعَلُ yaf'al<u>u</u> <u>he</u> does	

Notes:

- Some Arabic words can even be made of 4 root letters. However, such instances are so rare that it is best to memorise them as you encounter them

Practice the patterns with:

ش ه د *ś h d* (witness); ق ت ل *q t l* (kill); س أ ل *s - l* (ask)

E.g.:

- Saála sāīluḥ bi'avābiḥ wāqi' ^{سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ} {70:1}

LESSON 2. 2-LETTER VERBS

Summary: Some verbs (actions) in Arabic are made up of 2 letters. These are called *ájwāf* ‘hollow’ verbs, because in reality they do have a middle root letter (either [و] *Wau*, or [ي] *Yâ*) which is so often invisible besides in their present and command tense form:

Table 2: 2-Letter Verb Patterns

SPECIAL	PRESENT	PAST	ROOT
قُلْ <i>qul</i> say!	يَقُولُ <i>yaqū<u>l</u></i> he says	قَالَ <i>qō<u>l</u>a</i> he said	ق و ل <i>q [u] l</i> say
قِيلَ <i>qī<u>l</u>a</i> it was said	يَقُولُونَ <i>yaqū<u>l</u>ū<u>n</u>a</i> they say	قَالُوا <i>qō<u>l</u>ū<u>a</u></i> they said	

Notes:

- When the middle root letter is [ي] *Yâ*, the first l of the present tense forms you see in the table would be l instead, and the l of the special command tense form in the table would be l instead

Practice the patterns with:

س ي ر *s [i] r* (go); ق و م *q [u] m* (stand); ب ي ع *b [i] ‘* (trade)

E.g.:

- وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ
- Waivā qīla lahum lā tufsidūs fi^a ‘lārđi qōlūa iṅnamā naḥnu muşliḥūn^a {2:11}

LESSON 3. 1-LETTER PREFIXES

Summary: Although most Arabic words come from 3 root letters, it can be difficult to identify what these letters are on a word with other letters attached at the beginning (prefixes). Learning the most common prepositions, conjunctions, etc (called 'particles' in Arabic) that are attached to words can boost knowledge of Arabic grammar and accelerate the understanding of the rest of the language:

Table 3: 1-Letter Prefix Meanings

EXAMPLE	MEANING	PREFIX
... átattacivu ášnāman^o ālihaṭan ... {6:...74...} ... "Do you hold to idols (as) deities?" ...	á... ...?	ا
Lā yaḥzunuhumu ʾlfaza'u ʾlakbaru... {21:103...} The greatest terror is not to upset them ...	á... ...er/est	
Bismi ʾllāhi ʾrRohmāni ʾrRohīm {1:1} By God the Caretaker and Caregiver's Name:	bi... with	ب
Wajā-at sayyāroīun faarsalū^o waridahum... {21:103...} And a travelling group came, so they sent their water-boy ...	fa... so/;	ف
Alḥamdu lillāhi Robbi ʾlʾālamīn^o {1:2} [The] commends are God's - Master of [the] Worlds,	li... to/'s	ل
... lawajadū^o fihi ʾctilāfan^o kaṭīro a {4:...82} ... they sure (would have) found many a discrepancy (with)in it	la... sure	

Notes:

- It is worth memorising every detail of this table on Arabic prefixes to avoid getting caught out by similar looking situations. For example, the *á...* used to turn a statement into a yes/no question is only found at the very beginning of Arabic sentences, while the *á...* used to make a particular quality (adjective) more intense (superlative) is put right at the beginning of that word
- There are many more prefixes and suffixes in Arabic that alter the way verbs (actions) look to give more information about the subject/object (doers/ones done to). These are explained in other lessons

رُبَّمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ <i>ʔrubamā yawaddu ʔllavīna kafarū lau kānū. muslimin</i> {15:2} Perhaps the ones (who) deny [will] desire that they had been submitters	mu... ...er	م
كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبْرَكٌ <i>Kitābun ánzalnāhu ilaika mubāroku</i> ... {38:28...} A text which We lowered to you is (being) kept to...	mu... ...ed	
يَبْنَیْ ءَادَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ <i>Yābaniē Ādama cuvū zīnatakum ʔinda kulli masjidin</i> ... {7:31...} Dear children of Adam, take up your attire among each prayer-place ...	ma... place/time	
... <i>al-miṣbāḥu</i> fie zujājaʔin ... {24:...35...} ... the light-source (being) in glass ...	mi... tool	
مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ <i>Mina ʔljiṇnaʔi wa...nnās</i> {144:6} From (among) [the] jin and [the] people	wa... and/while	وَ
وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ <i>Wa ssamā-i vāti ʔlburūj</i> {85:1} By the sky (full) of constellations	wa... (I swear) by	
ثُمَّ جِئْتُ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يُّمُوسَىٰ ... <i>tuṇma jīta ʔalaē qodariṇ yāMūsāē</i> {20:...40} You then came under an arrangement, (My) dear Moses.	ya... dear	يَ

LESSON 4. PAST TENSE VERBS

Summary: In Arabic past tense verbs (actions), the subject (doer) is mentioned at the end of the word. The number of subjects can also be expressed as 1 (singular), 2 (dual), or at least 3 (plural):

Table 4: Past Tense Verb Patterns

ROOT: ض ر ب ḍ r b (hit)

PLURAL (3+)	DUAL (2)	SINGULAR (1)	PERSON
ضَرَبْنَا ḍorob<u>nā</u> <u>we</u> hit	ضَرَبْتُمَا ḍorob<u>tū</u> <u>I</u> hit	ضَرَبْتُ ḍorob<u>tū</u> <u>I</u> hit	أَنَا / نَحْنُ ānā/naḥnu <u>I/we</u>
ضَرَبْتُمْ ḍorob<u>tum</u>/<u>nna</u> <u>you all</u> hit	ضَرَبْتُمَا ḍorob<u>tumā</u> <u>you both</u> hit	ضَرَبْتَ ḍorob<u>tā</u>/<u>tī</u> <u>you</u> hit	أَنْتَ / أَنْتِ / أَنْتُمَا / أَنْتُمْ / أَنْتِ ánta/ánti/ántumā /ántum/ántunnā <u>you/you both/you all</u>
ضَرَبُوا ḍorob<u>ū</u> <u>they</u> hit	ضَرَبَا ḍorob<u>ā</u> <u>they both</u> hit	ضَرَبَ ḍorob<u>a</u> <u>he</u> hit	هُوَ / هُمَا / هُمْ huwa/humā/hum <u>he/they both/they</u>
ضَرَبْنَ ḍorob<u>na</u> <u>they</u> hit	ضَرَبَتَا ḍorob<u>atā</u> <u>they both</u> hit	ضَرَبَتْ ḍorob<u>at</u> <u>she</u> hit	هِيَ / هُمَا / هُنَّ hiya/humā/hunna <u>she/they both/they</u>

Notes:

- The ...a found at the end of plural 3rd person ('they') verbs in Arabic is silent (not pronounced)

LESSON 5. PRESENT/FUTURE TENSE VERBS

Summary: In Arabic, present/future tense verbs, the subject (doer) is mentioned at the beginning of the word. Suffixes (endings) can also be added to express a plural number of subjects:

Table 5: Present/Future Tense Verb Patterns

ROOT: ض ر ب ḍ r b (hit)

EXAMPLES	PLURAL	ROOT	PRESENT	FUTURE
<u>á</u> ḍrib ^u I hit <u>sa</u> <u>á</u> ḍrib ^u I will hit	/	ضَرَبُ ḍrib ^u hit	أَ á... I ...	سَأَ sa... ... will ...
<u>na</u> ḍrib ^u we hit <u>sa</u> <u>na</u> ḍrib ^u we will hit	/	ضَرَبُ ḍrib ^u hit	نَ na... we ...	سَأَ sa... ... will ...
<u>ta</u> ḍrib ^u you/she hit <u>ta</u> ḍrib ^{na} they hit	نَ na they	ضَرَبُ ḍrib ^u hit	تَ ta... you/she/ they ...	سَأَ sa... ... will ...
<u>ya</u> ḍrib ^u he hit <u>ya</u> ḍrib ^{ūna} they hit	وَنَ ūna they	ضَرَبُ ḍrib ^u hit	يَ ya... he/they ...	سَأَ sa... ... will ...

Notes:

- The *ta...* prefix can mean 'you' or 'she'. The much more common meaning is 'you', and this is what should be assumed, unless the context indicates that the sentence is about a female.

LESSON 6. VERB FORMS

Summary: There are many ways of morphing a verb (action) in Arabic to alter its basic meaning. These variants can be used to express for example a strengthening of the action, or more information about the object (one done to). Out of the 15 possible forms in total, only the first 10 are common enough to be worth memorising:

Table 6: Verb Form Patterns

ROOT: ل ف ع ل (do)

FORM	TYPICAL MEANINGS	VERBAL NOUN	PRESENT	PAST
1 I	Basic form E.G. to do	فَعَلَ (NOT FIXED)	يَفْعَلُ YAF'ALU	فَعَلَ FA'ALA
		katb writing	katubu he writes	kataba he wrote
2 II	CAUSATIVE E.G. to <u>make to</u> do INTENSIVE E.G. to <u>really</u> do REPETITIVE E.G. to <u>keep</u> doing	تَفْعِيلُ TAF'IL	يُفَعِّلُ YUFA'ILU	فَعَّلَ FA'ALA
		ta'līm teaching	yu'allimu he teaches	'allama he taught
3 III	ASSOCIATIVE E.G. to do <u>with others</u>	مُفَاعَلَةٌ \ فَعَالٍ MUFĀ'ALAH / FI'ĀL	يُفَاعِلُ YUFĀ'ILU	فَاعَلَ FĀ'ALA
		qitāl fighting	yuqōtilu he fights	qōtala he fought
4 IV	CAUSATIVE E.G. to <u>cause to</u> do	إِفْعَالُ ÍF'ĀL	يُفَعِّلُ YUF'ILU	أَفْعَلَ ĀF'ALA
		īcrōj expulsion	yucriju he expels	ācroja he expelled
5 V	REFLEXIVE (of form 2) E.G. to <u>really self</u> do / to <u>keep self</u> doing	تَفَعُّلُ TAFĀ"UL	يَتَفَعَّلُ YATAFA"ALU	تَفَعَّلَ TAFĀ"ALA
		tawakkul entrustment	yatawakkalu he entrusts	tawakkala he entrusted

Practice the patterns with:

أَخَذَ á c v (take); عَلِمَ ' l m (know); نَزَلَ n z l (lower)

Notes:

- Form 9 is quite rare, being mostly reserved for colours or defects

6 VI	REFLEXIVE (of form 3) E.G. to do <u>with each other</u>	تَفَاعَلَ TAFĀ'UL	يَتَفَاعَلُ YATAFĀ'ALU	تَفَاعَلَ TAFĀ'ALA
		ta'āwun cooperation	yata'āwanu he cooperates	Ta'āwana he cooperated
7 VII	REFLEXIVE E.G. to <u>let self</u> do PASSIVE (of form 1) E.G. to <u>be done to</u>	انْفَعَلَ INFĪ'ĀL	يَنْفَعَلُ YANFA'ILU	انْفَعَلَ INFA'ALA
		inqilab turning back	yanqolibu he turns back	inqolaba he turned back
8 VIII	REFLEXIVE (of form 1) E.G. to <u>self</u> do	اِفْتَعَلَ IFTI'ĀL	يَفْتَعَلُ YAFTA'ILU	اِفْتَعَلَ IFTA'ALA
		ictilāf difference	yactalifu he differs	ictalafa he differed
9 IX	TRANSFORMATIVE E.G. to <u>become the doing</u>	اِفْعَلَلَ IF'ILĀL	يَفْعَلُّ YAF'ALLU	اِفْعَلَّ IF'ALLA
		iħmirōr reddening	yaħmarru he reddens	iħmarro he reddened
10 X	REQUESTIVE E.G. to <u>try to</u> do / to <u>try for the doing</u> CONSIDERATIVE E.G. to <u>make out as doing</u>	اِسْتَفْعَلَ ISTIFĀL	يَسْتَفْعَلُ YASTAF'ILU	اِسْتَفْعَلَ ISTAF'ALA
		istigfār trying for forgiveness	yastagfiru he tries for forgiveness	istagfaro he tried for forgiveness

LESSON 7. 3-LETTER WORD SUMMARY

Summary: Active verbs (actions that mention the doer) in Arabic can be manipulated into passive verbs - which hide the subject (doer). They can also be changed into nouns that describe a place where the action is performed, a time when it is done, or a tool used to carry it out.

Table 7: 3-Letter Word Patterns Summary

ROOT: ك ت ب k t b (write)

NOUNS	PASSIVE VERBS	ACTIVE VERBS
كَاتِب <i>kātib</i> writer	كُتِبَ <i>kutiba</i> it was written	كَتَبَ <i>kataba</i> he wrote
مَكْتُوب <i>maktūb</i> written (thing)	يُكْتَبُ <i>yuktab^u</i> it is being written	يَكْتُبُ <i>yaktub^u</i> he writes
مَكْتَب <i>maktab</i> writing place/time (office)	سَيُكْتَبُ <i>sayuktab^u</i> it will be written	سَيَكْتُبُ <i>sayaktub^u</i> he will write
مِكتَاب <i>miktāb</i> writing tool		اُكْتُبْ <i>uktub</i> write!

LESSON 8. POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Summary: Possessive expressions show a relationship between two things with ‘of’ or ‘s’ (e.g. the Book of God, or God’s Book). In Arabic, the ‘possessor’ is mentioned after the ‘possessed’. When the possessor is a pronoun (person), it can simply be attached as a suffix of the possessed:

Table 8: Possessive Pronoun Patterns

PLURAL	DUAL	SINGULAR	PERSON
رَبُّنَا <i>robbunā</i> our master	/	رَبِّي <i>robbī</i> my master	1 st
رَبُّكُمْ <i>robbukum</i> (all) your master	رَبُّكُمَا <i>robbukumā</i> (both) your master	رَبِّكَ <i>robbuk^a</i> your master	2 nd
رَبُّكُنَّ <i>robbukunn^a</i> (all) your master		رَبِّكِ <i>robbuki</i> your master	2 nd F
رَبُّهُمْ <i>robbuhum</i> their master	رَبُّهُمَا <i>robbuhumā</i> (both) their master	رَبُّهُ <i>robbuh^u</i> his master	3 rd
رَبُّهُنَّ <i>robbuhunn^a</i> their master		رَبُّهَا <i>robbuhā</i> her master	3 rd F

LESSON 9. DUAL/PLURAL NOUNS

Summary: All nouns (things) and adjectives (qualities) in Arabic are one of two genders - masculine or feminine. Feminine objects often have a [ة] *Tâ Marbūṭah* at the end. The active participle (doer) form of a word has a different sound plural suffix (ending) for each gender to describe two or more objects:

Table 9: Dual/Plural Patterns

ROOT: ع م ب ' b d (serve)

SUFFIX	FEMININE	MASCULINE	COUNT
ـــــــــ / ـــــــــ / ـــــــــ ... <i>un</i> / ... <i>in</i> / ... <i>an</i>	عَابِدَةٌ 'ābidaṭ ^u <i>un</i> servant	عَابِدٌ 'ābid ^u <i>un</i> servant	Single 1
ـــــــــَانِ / ـــــــــَيْنِ ... <i>ān</i> ⁱ / ... <i>ain</i> ⁱ	عَابِدَتَانِ / عَابِدَتَيْنِ 'ābidaṭ ^{ān} <i>i</i> / <i>ain</i> ⁱ (two) servants	عَابِدَانِ / عَابِدَيْنِ 'ābid ^{an} <i>i</i> / <i>ain</i> ⁱ (two) servants	Dual 2
ـــــــــُونَ / ـــــــــِيْنَ / ـــــــــَاتِ ... <i>ūn</i> ^a / ... <i>īn</i> ^a / ... <i>āt</i> ⁱ	عَابِدَاتٌ 'ābidāṭ ⁱ servants	عَابِدُونَ / عَابِدِينَ 'ābid ^{ūn} <i>a</i> / <i>īn</i> ^a servants	(Sound) Plural 3+

Notes:

- There are also many broken plural patterns in Arabic, which are formed by inserting vowels in between the root letters

E.g.:

[No ...n nūn ending] *masjid* > *masājid* مَسَاجِد (prayer-places); *ṣahīd* > *ṣuḥadā* شُهَدَاء (witnesses); *ṣodīq* > *ʿaṣḍīq* أَصْدِقَاء (honest ones); *miṭḥaḥ* > *maḥāṭiḥ* مَفَاتِيح (keys)

kitāb > *kutub* كُتُب (texts); *tājir* > *tujjār* تَجَّار (traders); *qalb* > *qulūb* قُلُوب (hearts); *nahr* > *anḥār* أَنْهَار (streams);

LESSON 10. VERB MOODS/NOUN CASES

Summary: As the order of Arabic words in a sentence is very fluid, 1 of 3 cases is marked at the end of a noun (thing) to clarify whether it is the subject (doer), object (one done to), or ‘observer’ (secondary clause object) of an action. 1 of 3 moods is also marked at the end of a verb (action) to mark whether it is actually happening (indicative), imaginary (subjunctive), or an instruction (jussive).

Table 10: Verb Mood/Noun Case Patterns

ROOT: أ م ر á m r (command/matter)

SUFFIX	VERB MOODS	NOUN CASES
... ^{un} /... ^u /... ^{ūn} ^a	yàmur ^u /yàmurū ^{na} يَأْمُرُ / يَأْمُرُونَ	ámr ^{un} /alámr ^u أَمْرٌ / الْأَمْرُ
/... ^o /... ^o وَنَ	Indicative Mood (<i>Marfū'</i>): • Real	Nominative Case (<i>Marfū'</i>): • Subject (doer) • Predicate (result) of nominal sentence
... ⁱⁿ /... ⁱ /... ^{īn} ^a	/	ámr ⁱⁿ /alámr ⁱ أَمْرٍ / الْأَمْرِ
/... ^{īn} /... ^{īn}		Genitive Case (<i>Majrūr</i>): • Object of preposition (e.g. <i>min</i> , 'alae, fī, ilae) • Possessor of possessive expression
... ^a ^a /... ^a /... ^{īn} ^a /... ^u ^a	yàmur ^a /yàmurū ^a يَأْمُرُ / يَأْمُرُوا	ámr ^{ona} /alámr ^o أَمْرًا / الْأَمَرِ
/... ^o /... ^o يَنْ / وَ	Subjunctive Mood (<i>Manṣūb</i>): • Hypothetical • After subjunctive particle (e.g. <i>ān</i> , <i>lan</i> , <i>li...</i>)	Accusative Case (<i>Manṣūb</i>): • Object (one done to) of verbal sentence • Adverb (describer of time/action/quality)
/... ^u ^a	yàmur/yàmurū ^a يَأْمُرُ / يَأْمُرُوا	/
/... ^o /... ^o وَا	Jussive Mood (<i>Majzūm</i>): • Commanded • After jussive particle (e.g. <i>lam</i> , <i>lā</i>)	

Notes:

- Arabic verbs are only one of two tenses - perfect (past), and imperfect (present/future). The imperfect tense especially refers to the future when it is preceded by *sa...*/*saufa*, or is in the subjunctive mood. Only an imperfect tense verb can be put into different moods
- Some words in Arabic are *mabnī* (indeclinable), meaning their endings do not change no matter what mood/case they are in, e.g. names like *Mūsae*, or particle words like *min*