

## Arabic Grammar and Vocabulary Posts – 2

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### Arabic's Greater Etymology

From: <http://www.arabiconlinecourse.net/2010/01/arabics-greater-etymology.html>

A set of base letters (in a particular order) gives us an abstract meaning, and nothing more. Morphology will tell us which patterns we can apply to these letters, what the result of applying those patterns will be, how to conjugate the resulting word (if possible), and what tangible meaning the new word conveys. Each pattern will give a slightly different meaning, but the underlying concept afforded by the base letters will always be present. This is known as Lesser Etymology (الاشتقاق الصغير).

Lesser Etymology works at the level of a set of base letters and it recognizes the common meanings that different words with the same root letters share. There is another type of etymology, however, called Greater Etymology (الاشتقاق الكبير) that recognizes the common meanings words with different base letters share. It looks at the common thread that runs through different words that Lesser Etymology would consider completely unrelated. And it gives strong attention to the relationship between letters and the meanings that they convey.

This tutorial discusses Greater Etymology.

## A Note on this Topic

This is by no means a mature science. It has been recorded to some degree in the books of Abu I-Fath <sup>°</sup>Uthmān b. Jinnī (Cf. *al-Khasā'is*), Abu <sup>°</sup>Ali al-Fārisī, and Abu I-Fadl <sup>°</sup>Abd I-Rahmān b. Abi Bakr Jalāl I-Dīn al-Suyūti. Other revered saints have commented on this science in passing, but it remains largely undiscovered territory.

Therefore, what we present here is based on the observation of scholars such as Ibn Jinnī. There are no rules, no systematic methodologies except those we impose ourselves, and no observations are to be taken as universally applicable regulations.

# Subject Landscape

Even after well over a millennium, this science is still experiencing its birth pangs. Here we attempt to categorize the sub-topics that it covers in order to get a better understanding of the definition and extent of this science.

This science asks:

- What is the relationship between (base) letters and the meanings they convey?
- How are different permutations of the same base letters related in meaning?
- Is the occurrence of a specific letter in the same position of different bases significant?
- And what if more than one letter is shared?
- What is the significance of the form and position of extra letters?

## Relationship Between Letters and Meanings

### ONOMATOPOEIA

Often times, the letters that make up words – in terms of their sounds, their weight, and other qualities – give an indication towards the meaning they convey. In other words, they are onomatopoeias. And this was something done intentionally by the Arabs when they were coining new words.

For example, the croaking of frogs to an Anglo-Saxon would sound like “*ribbit, ribbit*”. But to Arabs it sounds more like “*dafda, dafda*”. Consequently, the Arabic word for frog is ضَفْدَع.

Furthermore, the sound of someone loudly munching on food such as dates (or peanut butter) sounds like “*smack, smack*”. Early Arabs recognized this sound as “*khadam, khadam*”. Therefore, the Arabic word for munching is خَضَمَ.

And similar to this is the sound of munching on something hard, as in an animal munching on pellets or its bridle. To us this may sound like “*cachunk, cachunk*”, but to the Arabs this sounded like “*qadam, qadam*”. As a result, the Arabic word for munching on something hard is قَضَمَ-يَقْضِمُ or قَضَمَ-يَقْضِمُ.

## QUALITY IN LETTERS VS. QUALITY IN MEANING

The letters of the Arabic alphabet have several associated qualities such as being light or heavy, being easy to pronounce or being difficult, and so forth. Most of the qualities have been listed below.

- the letters in فحثة شخص سكت are pronounced weakly and with a flowing breath, whereas the other letters are pronounced with more vigour and do not flow as well
- the letters in أجد قط بكت are hard when pronounced, while the other letters are softer
- the letters in خص ضغط قظ are the heaviest letters of the language; they are heavy, fat, thick, full-mouth letters, while the other letters are not as intense
- the letters ص، ض، ط، ظ are especially full letters and the tongue rises to the top of the mouth and embraces the palate during their pronunciation
- the letters in فر من لب are articulated very easily, quickly, swiftly, and with minimal effort, whereas the other letters are not quite as easily pronounced
- the letters in قطب جد, when without vowels, will be pronounced with somewhat of an echo
- the letters ز، س، ص create a slight whistle when articulated
- the letter ش vibrates in the mouth when pronounced
- the letter ر causes a vibration and shiver of the tongue
- the letters و and ي flow very nicely and they have the capacity to be extended to several morae

Often the letters of a word have qualities that reflect the meaning that the word conveys. If the letters are intense, for example, the meaning may have an aspect of intensity to it.

An example of this is found in the word خفّ. It has two ف – a letter which is weak, flowing, easy to pronounce, and so forth. And interestingly, this word means to be light or nimble. Similarly, the words حاق and ضاق contain letters that are hard, thick, and have other such qualities. And they both mean to squeeze, constrict, or envelop. And finally, the word غلاظ, whose letters are very intense, means to be rugged, tough, or thick.

Furthermore, a letter in a given word that has a particular quality may be replaced with a counterpart letter that has the opposite quality. On their own, the two words might mean roughly the same thing, but often – and especially

when juxtaposed – their meanings contrast in a manner similar to the contrast of the two letters.

For example, the word نَضَحَ means to flow or splash (as in a river). The letter ح has the quality of being weak and it flows in the mouth easily. Consequently, this word indicates on a gently moving stream. The letter خ, however, is much thicker and harder. Therefore, we can make a switch in this word resulting in نَضَخَ. This new word, although it may or may not be found in a dictionary, indicates on a gushing stream. Similarly, the word قَدَّ means to cut something lengthwise. Notice that the letter د has a long echo. The letter ط also has an echo, but it is relatively shorter and this letter is pronounced much more quickly. Hence, if we switch the د with ط, we end up with قَطَّ which means to cut width-wise.

This sort of thing is, of course, قياسي and not سماعي.

Making these switches is at the height of eloquence, it is the ne plus ultra of literary perfection and it represents the pith of lexicological proficiency. It is no wonder that this sort of thing is well found in the Qur'an. The example of the gushing stream is used by His Ultimate Majesty in the following verse.

﴿فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ نَضَّاخَتَانِ﴾

Therein will be two springs gushing forth

Yet another example of this is found in the following verse that speaks of the people of Thamud. In the verse, the word طغوى has been employed using a واو as opposed to a ياء. Both are allowed, but the former is a stronger letter and it does not glide as well as the latter. Hence the واو version of the word is more intense, indicating on the extreme severity of the insolence of the Thamud people.

﴿كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا﴾

The people of Thamud denied (the truth) out of their insolent rebelliousness

# Base Letter Permutations

Although every set of base letters has a unique meaning, it has been noticed that the same set with different permutations has an underlying connotation that is common to all permutations. For example, the roots (ج، ب، ر), (ج، ر، ب), (ج، ر، ب), (ب، ج، ر), (ب، ر، ج), and (ب، ج، ر) all have different meanings, but they share a common abstract connotation by virtue of the fact that they share the same letters.

This is not universal, of course, but it is far too common to ignore. Every set of three letters has six permutations. Now all of these might be actual roots (as in the case of ج، ر، ب) or it may be that not all the permutations are meaningful.

Let's take the letters ق، ل، and و as a quintessential example. These letters (not in any particular order) give the abstract connotation of nimbleness and haste. Now consider the chart below which considers all six permutations of these letters (all of which are meaningful) and analyzes how this abstract connotation comes into play.

Permutation (i.e. a set of base letters)	Some Associated Meanings	Connection with the abstract meaning
ق، و، ل	قول: speech	speech is called قول because it is the thing to which the mouth and tongue hasten and for which they are nimble
ق، ل، و	قلو: wild donkey	because this type of donkey is observed to be quick and nimble
	قلا: to bake/fry	because baking causes the food to become dry, light, and it hastens to break apart
و، ق، ل	وقل-يقل: to climb (mount. goat)	due to the goat's quick and nimble movements up a mountain
و، ل، ق	ولق-يلق: to rush	this is clear
ل، و، ق	لوق: to work with the hands	as in to knead something and move it quickly within the hands
	لوقة: cream	cream is called لوقة because it's light and moves easily
ل، ق، و	لقوة: eagle	an eagle has been called لقوة due to its swift movements and nimble strides.

We can thus make the conclusion that base letters such as these have two levels of meanings: the first is the one from the letters themselves, and the other is from their permutation.

Below is a similar table with a different set of letters. The letters are ك, ل, and م which hold the abstract connotation of strength and intensity/severity.

Permutation	Some Associated Meanings	Connection with the abstract meaning
ك، ل، م	كَلْمٌ: wound	called such because it is serious and life threatening
	كلام: speech	because it causes the most intense form of pain
ك، م، ل	كامل: to be complete	when something is complete, it is stronger and more intense than when it was incomplete
ل، ك، م	لكم: to punch or box	a strong and severe blow to the cheek causing intense pain
ل، م، ك	<b>Does Not Exist</b>	
م، ك، ل	بئر مَكُول: a dried up well	called such due to the serious and intense impact a dried up well has on a desert community
م، ل، ك	ملك: to own or rule	due to the strength the ruler has on the ruled

Similarly, the letters س, ق, and و carry the abstract meaning of collecting (e.g. سوق means market, a place where merchandise is collected). And likewise there are many other examples.

## Common Letters

The previous section dealt with roots that share all three of their base letters. Here we discuss the case where one or two letters are common between different roots and they occur in a common position. For example, when the letter ت occurs in the second position (whatever the first and third positions may hold), the meaning is often that of cutting or spreading.

Notice that the difference between this section and the previous is twofold:

- previously, all three letters were the same, while here one or two are different
- previously, the positions of the letters didn't matter so long as they were the same, while here the position is important

Taking our example with the ت as the second base letter, consider the following words and their meanings.

- أتى: to come (i.e. sever yourself from where you were)
- بتّ: to sever; achieve; terminate; decide once and for all
- بتر: to sever; amputate
- بتك to sever
- بتل: to sever; make final
- حتّ: to scrape off
- حتّف: death (i.e. severance from life)
- حتن: to circumcise
- etc

Notice also from the above list the even stronger resemblance between words that share more than just one letter. For example, the words ختر and ختل both share the first two letters while the former means to betray and the latter means to double-cross. Similarly, the words شفا-يشفو and شفى-يشفي share their first two letters while the former means to be on the verge of death and the latter means to cure someone from the verge of death.

Sometimes the meanings of such words are not related on a literal level. Instead, they are often related on the basis of causality. For example, the word عسف means oppression and the word أسف means grief; when oppression prevails, grief follows. Similarly, the word حبس means to withhold and the word حمس means to be eager or zealous; when something is withheld, people become eager for it. And finally, هزّ means to sway back and forth while أزرّ means to buzz; when something (as in a mosquito's wing) sways intensely and repeatedly, it starts to buzz.

One should not object at this point, exclaiming that these meaning associations are farfetched. In fact this was the intent of the Arabs.

## Extra Letters

Extra letters that are added to words are often indicative of the types of meanings they convey.

BASE LETTER DUPLICATION

The verbal paradigm **فَعَّل** is achieved by doubling the middle base letter and one of its most prominent connotations is to indicate that an action has been done repeatedly. For example, the simple verb **قطع** means to cut, but the enhanced verb **قَطَعَ** means to cut repeatedly (i.e. to chop). Notice that the multiplicity in the word has indicated on the multiplicity in the meaning.

Moreover, the paradigms **افْعَلَّ** and **افْعَالَّ** also have a doubling of a base letter and they afford the connotation of something happening a lot or repeatedly. For example, **احْمَرَّ** means to become very red or to blush and **ادْهَمَّ** means to become dark green or black. Notice how the duplication of the base letters has indicated on the intensity and even the multiplicity of the meaning.

Similarly, the hyperbolic participle has many patterns. If we pry deep enough, we will notice that not all of these patterns give exactly the same sense of exaggeration to the root letters. The pattern **فَعَّال** (as well as **فَعَّالَة**) give the sense of doing something repeatedly to the extent that it becomes a habit, a profession, or the like. For example, **رَحَّالَة** means globetrotter (someone who travels repeatedly). Notice that here too the duplication of the base letter has indicated upon the duplication in the meaning.

This duplication doesn't, in fact, have to be extra. 4-lettered words with letters one and three the same and two and four the same also connote repetition and duplication. For example, the word **قَلْقَل** means to be agitated; a state during which one moves around repeatedly. **زَعَزَع** means to convulse. **صَلْصَل** means to jingle, rattle, ring, or chink; all of these things are done repeatedly. Notice how the multiplicity in letters has indicated on the multiplicity in the action afforded by them.

#### EXTRA LETTER POSITIONING

Not only does duplication play a role in the meaning, but its placement is also significant. Notice from above that with **فَعَّل** and **فَعَّال**, it is the middle letter that has been duplicated, whereas with **افْعَلَّ** and **افْعَالَّ**, it is the last letter.

In the case of the first two patterns, the connotation of repetition is specific in the sense that the repetition happens quickly; no sooner does one instance of the action stop that the next one begins. Moreover, the action itself is choppy; it happens in small, quick instances. For example, **تَقَطَّعَ** (chopping) is something which is done quickly and one instance of the action is not entirely complete before the next starts. So notice how the speed and choppiness of the meaning is reflected in the fact that the duplication happens in the middle of the word; the word doesn't end before the duplication is indicated.

Conversely, the duplication in افعالّ and افعالّ coming at the end indicates that the repetitions of the action are well spaced (relatively speaking) and that the action is not choppy but smooth. For example, احمرار (blushing) is something that happens saliently and it is not choppy; ergo the connotation of intensity. And this has been indicated by the duplication happening at the end of the word; the action completes, then duplication happens.

Something similar happens in the case of صرّ and صرصر. The former means to hum or buzz (as in a grasshopper) and the latter means to hum with pauses in between (e.g. to whip, as in the wings of an eagle). Notice how the compactness of the letters in صرّ indicates on the proximity of noises in a hum, and how the capaciousness of the letters in صرصر indicates on the sparseness of the noises when whipping.

Thus far, our examples have been limited to base letter duplication. But the meanings afforded by extra letters as well as their positions is by no means limited to this. For example, consider the verb paradigm استفعال. Notice that the extra letters that offer the “seeking” meaning (which is by far the most productive connotation of this paradigm) are brought before the base letters at the front of the word. This is because when you want something, you do not yet have it. First comes the seeking, and then comes the action afforded by the base letters. Hence the extra س and ت have accordingly been brought before the base letters.

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## Types of ما

Taken from : <http://www.arabiconlinecourse.net/2009/12/types-of.html>

There are approximately ten types of ما in the Arabic language. That is to say, these are ten homonyms. Some of these ما are nouns while others are particles, and their meanings and functions can be vastly different. Therefore, being able to recognize which ما is which is an essential skill for grammar and comprehension, the lack of which can lead to major errors in reading and comprehension.

This tutorial discusses each type of ما with respect to its meanings and provides some helpful clues on how it will be used in sentences.

## The Types of ما

### Interrogative – ما الاستفهامية

This ما is a noun which is used to ask a question and it is typically translated as “what ...?” For example, we may ask “what is wrong with you?” Consider the example below.

What is wrong with you that  
you do not fight in the way of  
God?

ما لكم لا تقاتلون في سبيل الله؟

It will be the very first word in the sentence unless it is preceded by a particle such as “and” or the like. Consider the example below.

And what is wrong with me  
that I do not worship the one  
who created me?

وما لي لا أعبد الذي فطرني؟

We usually find this ما before nominal sentences, but it may come before a verb. Often in this situation, the ما acts as the direct object of the verb, as in the following example.

What will you worship after  
me?

ما تعبدون من بعدي؟

And often the word ذا comes between ما and the verb, in which case the ما is the subject of the nominal sentence. Consider the following.

What is it that God intends with  
this as an example?

ماذا أراد الله بهذا مثلاً؟

A final point to note is that this particular ما will lose its aleph when in the genitive case. This applies to both being preceded by a genitival particle as well as being in a possessive structure. Consider the following.

Regarding what do they  
question each other?

عمّ [عن ما] يتساءلون؟

### Pronominal – ما الموصولة

This ما is a relative pronoun (a type of noun) used for inanimate objects.

Consequently, it is translated as “that which”, or simply “that/what/which”. This is a very popular usage of the word. Consider the following.

Follow that which has been revealed to you.

اتَّبِعْ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ

Often there will be a pronoun in the relative clause that refers back to this ما. This will indicate that this word is in its pronominal function. However, even if the pronoun has been dropped, the context is almost always clear and sufficient to deduce which ما is being used. In the example above, we would never employ the translation “follow.... what has been revealed to you?” This is quite clear from the context.

### **ما النافية – Negative**

This ما is a particle used to negate the perfect (past tense) verb. It almost invariably comes before such verbs; consider the following.

They would not have added to you (anything) except disorder.

ما زادوكم إلاّ حبالاً

Although this ما is almost always followed by a past tense verb, it does not mean that every ما followed by such a verb is negative; it may be pronominal, for example, as in the following example.

Then for them is two thirds of what he has left.

فلهنّ ثلثا ما ترك

Finally, this ما is sometimes followed by an imperfect verb. This has minor rhetorical considerations and is somewhat rare. An example follows.

Say: I do not ask you for a reward for it.

قل ما أسئلكم عليه من أجر

### **المشبهة بـ"ليس" – ليس**

This ما, too, is negative. The difference is that this one enters upon a nominal sentence, not a past tense verb. It acts like ليس in both meaning as well as in the fact that it leaves the subject of the sentence nominative and it renders the predicate accusative.

Although this ما is relatively scarce, the accusative predicate can be used as a clue to determine that it is this ما. Consider the following.

This is not a man.

ما هذا بشراً

Like ليس, if the predicate is a single word or a short phrase, an extra باء comes before it in order to emphasize the negation. Consider the example below.

I am not at all responsible for you.

ما أنا عليكم بحفيظ

And many a time we find the subject preceded by من also for the purposes of emphasizing the negation. In such a situation, the predicate is often omitted. See the following example.

There is absolutely no creature (in existence) except that He has a hold on its forehead.

وما من دابة إلا هو آخذ بناصيتها

### **Adverbial – ما الظرفية**

This ما is widely considered to be a particle and it gives the meaning of “as long as”. It comes before both perfect and imperfect verbs, and specifically, it is popularly brought before an imperfect verb with لم. But this does not mean that every ما in this position will be ما الظرفية.

If you divorce women so long as you have not touched them

إن طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ

And it is also popularly brought before the verb دام, in which case the ما is both ظرفية and مصدرية. Consider the following.

And He enjoined prayer and charity on me so long as I am alive.

وأوصاني بالصلاة والزكاة ما دمت حيا

### **Gerundival – ما المصدرية**

Much like the particle أَنْ, this ما renders the following perfect or imperfect verb into the gerund meaning. And it is a particle just like ان. Below is an example of its usage.

And the land became constricted upon you despite it being vast.

وضاقت عليكم الأرض بما رحبت

It is quite often seen after locative nouns such as بعد, عند, قبل, and others. Below is an example.

So whoever changes it after  
having heard it

فمن بدّله بعدما سمعه ...

And, in this capacity, it does not necessarily have to be followed by a verb. Below is an example where it is followed by a nominal sentence.

While I was walking

بينما أنا أمشي ...

### Indefinite Adjectival – ما النكرة الموصوفة

This ما connects with the indefinite word prior to it, becoming an adjective for it, and exaggerates the indefiniteness. It is a noun. For example, compare “meet me at some time” and “meet me at any time at all.” The Arabic equivalent is below.

Meet me at any time at all.

لاقني في وقت ما

### Indefinite Complete – ما النكرة التامة

This ما is a noun and it is used in the place of the word شيء (thing) or something similarly abstract. It is used in very particular situations, one of which is after the verb نعم. In the example below, the ما that connects to the verb نعم could have been replaced by the abstract word “thing”:

What a great thing the Arabic  
language is!

نعمًا لسان العربية

Another instance, and perhaps the only other one, is the use of this ما before a verb of astonishment (فعل التعجب). In the example below, the ما is in the place of the abstract word “person”. The deeper translation of the example would be “what person (or even thing) is greater than Zaid?!”

How great Zaid is!

ما أحسن زيدا

### Preventative – ما الكافة

This ما comes after the حروف مشبهة بالفعل. It is a particle and it stops these حروف from carrying out their typical grammatical influence. In the case of إن especially, even the meaning is altered from “indeed” to that of restriction. Below is an example.

Say: I am only a man like  
yourselves.

قل إنّما أنا بشر مثلكم

### ما الزائدة – Extra

This is the ما that comes extra and it is considered a particle. It typically comes extra before particles and nouns of condition, as well as after genitival particles. An example of the first as follows.

And the witnesses should not refuse when they are called upon.

ولا يَأْبُ الشَّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا

And an example of the second is seen below. In some cases, the ما coming after a genitival particle has no effect, yet sometimes it stops the particle from rendering the following word genitive. In the example below, the ما does not stop the effect of the particle.

So it is due to a mercy from God that you were lenient towards them.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لَنْتَ لَهُمْ

### **Summary**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Function</b>
استفهامية	used to ask a question
موصولة	introduces a relative clause
نافية	negates the past tense verb
مشبهة بـ "ليس"	resembles ليس in meaning and function
ظرفية	"as long as"
مصدرية	turns the following verb/sentence into a gerund
نكرة موصوفة	emphasizes the negation of a preceding noun
نكرة تامة	in place of the word "thing"
كافة	comes after the particles that resemble verbs
زائدة	extra

### **Exercises**

Identify all the instances of ما from the following sentences and describe the function of each one.

- a. ما قلتُ لهم إلاّ ما أمرتني به أن اعبد الله ربي وربكم. وكنتم عليهم شهيدا ما دمتُ فيهم
- b. وجعلني مباركا أين ما كنتُ وأوصاني بالصلوة والزكوة ما دمتُ حيا
- c. سنلقي في قلوب الذين كفروا الرعب بما أشركوا بالله ما لم يتزلّ به سلطانا
- d. إن تُبدوا الصدقاتِ فنعما هي
- e. قل إنّما حرّم ربي الفواحش ما ظهر منها وما بطن
- f. وما هو بمزحزحه من العذاب أن يُعمر. والله بصير بما يعملون
- g. لها ما كسبت ولكم ما كسبتم. ولا تُسئلون عما كانوا يعملون
- h. قال عما قليل ليصبحن نادمين
- i. ويقولون هو من عند الله وما هو من عند الله
- j. وقال الإنسان ما لها

## Arabic Numbers

Taken from:

<http://www.arabiconlinecourse.net/2009/12/arabic-numbers.html>

### How we will approach this Topic

Consider the following grouping of numbers and try to become accustomed to this categorization. Notice that there is a lot of division based on putting 1 & 2 into one category, and 3 to 9 in another.

Group	Numbers
A	1, 2
B	3..10
C	11, 12
D	13..19
E	20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90
F	21, 22, 31, 32, 41, 42, 51, 52, 61, 62, 71, 72, 81, 82, 91, 92
G	23..29, 33..39, 43..49, 53..59, 63..69, 73..79, 83..89, 93..99
H	100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900
I	1000 onwards

For each of these groups, we want to consider the following:

- How do you construct the number – ordinal and cardinal?
- What is the grammatical gender of the number?



...	23	22	21	F, G
...	ثلاث وعشرون	إثنان وعشرون	واحد وعشرون	Cardinal
...	ثالث وعشرون	ثاني وعشرون	حادي وعشرون	Ordinal

  

900	800	700	600	500	400	300	200	100	H
					100,000	...	3,000	2,000	1,000
تسعمائة	ثمانمائة	سبعمائة	ستمائة	خمسمائة	أربعمائة	ثلاثمائة	ثلاث	...	Cardinal
					مائة آلاف	مئتان	ألف	الف	Ordinal
تاسع	ثامن	سابع	سادس	خامس	رابع	ثالث	...	...	Ordinal
مائة	مائة	مائة	مائة	مائة	مائة	مائة	...	...	Ordinal

### Examples

a floor	طابق	1 <sup>st</sup> floor	الطابق الواحد
2 floors	طابقان	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	الطابق الثاني
5 tests	خمسة امتحانات	5 <sup>th</sup> test	الامتحان الخامس
11 pictures	احدى عشرة صورة	11 <sup>th</sup> picture	الصورة الحادية عشرة
18 arrows	ثمانية عشر سهما	18 <sup>th</sup> arrow	السهم الثامن عشر
60 buckets	ستون دلو	60 <sup>th</sup> bucket	الدلو الستون
31 cities	واحدة وثلاثون مدينة	31 <sup>st</sup> city	المدينة الحادية والثلاثون
29 regions	تسع وعشرون منطقة	29 <sup>th</sup> region	المنطقة التاسعة والعشرون
300 soldiers	ثلاثمائة عسكري	300 <sup>th</sup> soldier	العسكري الثالث مائة
413 thieves	اربعمائة وثلاثة عشر لصا	413 <sup>th</sup> thief	اللص الرابع مائة والثالث عشر
year	سنة الف وتسعمائة	1,985 <sup>th</sup> year	السنة الالف والتاسعة مائة
5198	وخمسة وثمانين		والخامسة والثمانون

### Grammatical Gender of the Numbers

The table below explains what the gender of a cardinal number will be given the word being counted. The ordinals have not been included because, in most cases, they act as adjectives for the counted word. So they will match in gender. For example, الثالث and المرأة الثالثة.

To facilitate the understanding of these rules, let's consider a rule of thumb: Consider the gender of the **singular form** of the word being counted. When the ones place is 1 or 2, the ones place will match that singular in gender. And when the ones place is a number between 3 and 9, it will mismatch.

Group	Numbers	Gender of Cardinals	Example
A	1, 2	There is no number, the counted word is used either as singular or dual as needed	رئيس، رئيسان مرأة، مرأتان
B	3..10	Ones place: gender opposite of the counted word	(sing.) امتحان ) ثلاثة امتحانات (sing.) مباراة(ثلاث مباريات
C	11, 12	Ones place: gender same as the counted word Tens place: gender same as the counted word	احد عشر بلدا إحدى عشرة ولاية
D	13..19	Ones place: gender opposite of the counted word Tens place: gender same as the counted word	أربعة عشر سبيلا أربع عشرة معجزة
E	20, 30, 40, 50, ...	Tens place: always masculine	خمسون صحيفا خمسون ورقة
F	21, 22, 31, 32, ...	Ones place: gender same as the counted word Tens place: always masculine	اثنان وستون مرباطا اثنان وستون زوجة
G	23..29, 33..39, ...	Ones place: gender opposite of the counted word Tens place: always masculine	سبعة وسبعون ركنا سبع وسبعون صدقة
H	100, 200, 300, ...	Hundreds place: always masculine since the word is feminine The word is always feminine	ثمانمائة وخمسة وعشرون بيتا ثمانمائة وخمس وعشرون دار
I	1000, 2000, ...	Thousands place: always feminine since the word is masculine	تسعة آلاف جلاد تسعة آلاف هرة

is always الفThe word  
masculine

Exercise: translate the following phrases into Arabic. The translations of the counted words have been provided. Where you see two words, you must use the underlined plural; the singular is there to help you figure out the gender.

- a. dog (كلب، كلاب)
- b. 7 kittens (هريرة، هريرات)
- c. 10 masc. students (طالب، طلاب)
- d. 11 mice (فأرة)
- e. 12 masc. classmates (زميل)
- f. 14 windows (شباك)
- g. 18 caravans (قافلة)
- h. 32 dates (تمرّة)
- i. 51 journalists (صحافيون)
- j. 96 frogs (ضفدع)
- k. 99 nicknames (كنية)
- l. 307 stars (نجم، نجوم)
- m. 411 telephones (هاتف)
- n. 789 beds (سريرة)
- o. 1,718 apples (تفاح)
- p. 36,036 peaches (درّاق)

## Grammatical Case of the Numbers & the Counted Words

The table below summarizes what **grammatical case** both the number and the counted word take.

Group	Numbers	Case of Number	Case of Word	Example
A	1, 2	There is no number	Determined by its position in the sentence	رأيت رجلين
B	3..10	Determined by its position in the sentence	The number and word form إضافة, so it will be genitive	لعب في ثلاثة ميادين
C	11, 12	Both parts are indeclinable;	The number and word form تميز	ثلاث

D	13..19	final letters take the فتحة vowel in all cases	so it will be accusative	عشرة عيناً
E	20, 30, 40, 50, ...			
F	21, 22, 31, 32, ...	Determined by its position in the sentence		خذ ثلاثاً وأربعين داراً
G	23..29, 33..39, ...			
H	100, 200, 300, ...	The number's case is	The number and word form	أوقف ثلاثمائة الف
I	1000, 2000, ...	determined by its position	إضافة, so it will be genitive	نائم

It is important to note that, when you have a complicated number like 1234, those numbers that form إضافة or تمييز will do so with the words that follow them, whether those words are the thing being counted or other numbers.

For example, in "أوقف ثلاثمائة الف نائم" ألف forms إضافة with مائة, "أوقف ثلاثمائة الف نائم".

Exercise: correctly inflect the underlined words in the following sentences:

- فانفجرت منه اثنتا عشرة عين
- أنزل الله مائة الف وأربعة وعشرون الف نبي

## Plurality of the Counted Words

The final task is to understand whether the word following the number will be **singular or plural**. This is a relatively simple topic summarized in the table below.

Group	Numbers	Plurality of Word	Example
A	1, 2	single or dual	ثعلبان، ثعلبان
B	3..10	plural	خمسة ثعلب
C	11, 12	single	احد عشر ثعلباً
D	13..19		خمسة عشر ثعلباً

E	20, 30, 40, 50, ...	خمسون ثعلباً
F	21, 22, 31, 32, ...	واحد وخمسون ثعلباً
G	23..29, 33..39, ...	خمسة وخمسون ثعلباً
H	100, 200, 300, ...	خمسمائة ثعلبٍ
I	1000, 2000, ...	خمسة آلاف ثعلبٍ

Exercise: correct the following phrases in terms of gender and grammatical case, as necessary:

- أحدَ عشرة فنادقَ
- اثننا عشرة درهماً
- تسعة عشرة كتابٍ
- خمسو قضاةٍ
- ثلاثة مائةٍ وإحدى وتسعين طاولاتٍ

## Extend your Knowledge

### NUMERALS

The numerals associated with the numbers are summarized in the following chart:

Number	Numeral	
صفر	٠	0
واحد	١	1
اثنان	٢	2
ثلاثة	٣	3
أربعة	٤	4
خمسة	٥	5
سنة	٦	6
سبعة	٧	7
ثمانية	٨	8

تسعة	٩	9
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## FRACTIONS

In Arabic, we use the word نصف to indicate one half. In order to indicate fractions with a numerator of 1 but denominators larger than 2, we place the cardinal numbers on the فُعْل pattern. The table below makes this clearer.

...	1/5	1/4	1/3	1/2
...	خُمْسٌ	رُبْعٌ	ثُلُثٌ	نِصْفٌ

In order to change the numerator, we use the rules of numbers we've just learned, using the denominator as the counted word. In essence, what we are saying is 'three one-quarters,' for example. Below are a few examples.

3/4	3/3	3/2	2/4	2/3	2/2
ثَلَاثَةٌ	ثَلَاثَةٌ	ثَلَاثَةٌ	رُبْعَانِ	ثُلُثَانِ	نِصْفَانِ
أَرْبَاعِ	أَثَلَاثِ	أَنْصَافِ			

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