
Message sent on behalf of Dr Rachael Harris, Senior Language Teaching Officer, Arabic

Hello

Firstly, congratulations on being offered a place to read Arabic (and probably something else) at Cambridge. A warm welcome to you.

As you may be aware, we ask our students to familiarise themselves with the Arabic script before they come up. This means being able to recognise letters when you see them, both in isolation and in words, to know roughly how they are pronounced, and to be able to read words when written with all their vowels and other signs, even if slowly. We will assume you know this at the beginning of our course, and the better you know it in advance, the easier it will make things for you. You can learn it in whichever way you like, but we have two resources you may find helpful, particularly if you combine both. The website has the advantage of including sound and some very useful exercises, the worksheet has more detailed explanations, more vocabulary and some other useful exercises. You can of course use other resources, e.g. those recommended on <https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/preparatory-reading-arabic>.

Website: <https://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/opencourseware/arabic/ae/arabic-essentials.html>. Start by reading the section on 'Open Courseware Specifications' on the bottom right of this page, then click on 'Arabic script' under Downloads. Please ignore the other topics here, they are in forms of Arabic not relevant to you at this point. Also please ignore the guidelines for handwriting on this site. It teaches you to copy the printed form of the letters, and you would have to unlearn this later, as we teach you the normal handwritten form from the start of the course. But do listen to the sounds and have a go at pronouncing them. Most of the videos with sounds give the name of the letter, but the sound of the letter itself is the first sound of its name (except for the first letter, 'alif). We will of course go over the sounds too at the beginning of the course. However you actually learn the letters, some of the exercises on this site will be useful in reinforcing them. I particularly recommend:

Flashcards

Reading (these are all English words regularly used in Arabic, or Arabic words that we use in English)

Match the halves

Special letters. It is worth learning the meanings of some of these words:

1. ﺱ Reading these words from right to left, the first two are names, and the third you should recognise. The words after that mean, in order: female student, school, university, magazine, room, coffee, car.

2. The words mean (right to left) no, peace, speech, necessary

3. A girl's name, on, he saw.

Worksheet: <https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/files/Arabic%20script%20worksheet.pdf>. This has no sound, but does tell you how to properly handwrite the letters. But you don't need to get to grips with that before you start the course unless you'd like to. It also gives you more vocabulary that would help you to get a head start.

If you have any questions about any of this, please feel free to contact me directly on rmh1001@cam.ac.uk.

Best wishes

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