

# Arabic Alphabet Pronunciation Chart Complete Guide — All 28 Letters

Arabic has three sound categories: Soft Sounds (closest to English), Arabic-Specific Sounds (require practice), and Guttural/Emphatic Sounds (unique to Arabic).

Start with the soft sounds — they feel familiar. Work toward the guttural sounds — they require a new muscle memory.

## TABLE A — SOFT SOUNDS (Easiest — Start Here)

| Arabic Letter | Letter Name | English Sound | Sounds Like           | Memory Aid                                     |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ا             | Alif        | A / Ā         | "A" in apple / "Ah"   | A tall vertical line — stands alone            |
| ب             | Baa         | B             | "B" in boy            | One dot below — like a boat with one passenger |
| ت             | Taa         | T             | "T" in top            | Two dots above — like two eyes                 |
| د             | Daal        | D             | "D" in dog            | Curves right — like a dog's tail               |
| ر             | Raa         | R (rolled)    | Spanish "R" in "pero" | Rolls forward like a wheel                     |
| ز             | Zaay        | Z             | "Z" in zoo            | Raa with one dot above                         |
| س             | Seen        | S             | "S" in sun            | Three teeth below — like a saw                 |
| ف             | Faa         | F             | "F" in fish           | One dot above — like a fish eye                |
| ك             | Kaaf        | K             | "K" in king           | Small mark inside — a crown                    |
| ل             | Laam        | L             | "L" in lamp           | Tall loop — leans left                         |

|    |      |          |                             |                                                      |
|----|------|----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| م  | Meem | M        | "M" in moon                 | Small circle — like a moon                           |
| ن  | Noon | N        | "N" in night                | One dot above — like a bowl with one drop            |
| هـ | Haa  | H (soft) | "H" in hat                  | Soft H — like a sigh                                 |
| و  | Waw  | W / Ū    | "W" in water / "oo" in moon | Double role: consonant + long vowel                  |
| ي  | Yaa  | Y / Ī    | "Y" in yes / "ee" in see    | Two dots below — double role: consonant + long vowel |

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**TABLE B — ARABIC-SPECIFIC SOUNDS (Moderate — Practice Needed)**

| Arabic Letter | Letter Name | English Sound  | Sounds Like                                 | Practice Tip                                |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| ث             | Thaa        | Th (voiceless) | "Th" in think / "Th" in three               | Tongue lightly between teeth — no vibration |
| ج             | Jeem        | J / G          | "J" in jam (MSA) / "G" in game (Egyptian)   | Varies by dialect — MSA uses J sound        |
| ذ             | Dhaal       | Th (voiced)    | "Th" in this / "Th" in the                  | Tongue between teeth — with vibration       |
| ش             | Sheen       | Sh             | "Sh" in ship / "Sh" in shine                | Lips slightly rounded — same as English     |
| خ             | Khaa        | Kh             | "Ch" in Scottish loch / "J" in Spanish José | Throat friction — not a hard K              |

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## TABLE C — EMPHATIC SOUNDS (Hard — Heavier Versions)

What is an emphatic sound? The same tongue position as the non-emphatic partner — but with the tongue pressed further down and back, creating a heavier, darker resonance. Surrounding vowels sound "deeper."

| Arabic Letter | Letter Name | Emphatic Of | Non-Emphatic Partner | Key Difference                                                                       |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ص             | Saad        | S           | س (Seen) — /s/       | Deeper, heavier S — tongue presses down. "Sad" in صَادُ feels lower than "sad"       |
| ض             | Daad        | D           | د (Daal) — /d/       | Unique to Arabic — tongue sides touch upper molars. Called "the letter of the Arabs" |
| ط             | Taa         | T           | ت (Taa) — /t/        | Tongue presses the full roof of the mouth — fuller, rounder T                        |
| ظ             | Dhaa        | Dh          | ذ (Dhaal) — /ð/      | Emphatic "Th" as in "this" — heavier, tongue pressed down                            |

## TABLE D — GUTTURAL SOUNDS (Hardest — No English Equivalent)

What is a guttural sound? Produced in the pharynx or at the back of the throat — sounds English speakers have never needed to make. These require dedicated audio practice and, ideally, a native teacher.

| Arabic Letter | Letter Name | English Approximation    | Where It Is Made         | Practice Technique                                                             |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ح             | Haa         | Deep breathy H           | Pharynx (throat)         | Breathe out as if fogging a mirror — but deeper, from the throat               |
| ع             | Ayn         | No equivalent — voiced A | Pharyngeal (deep throat) | Constrict the throat — then add voice. Like starting to cough, then vocalising |

|   |       |            |                        |                                                                    |
|---|-------|------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| غ | Ghayn | French "R" | Uvula (back of throat) | Like the French "R" in "Paris" — a gentle gargle                   |
| ق | Qaaf  | Deep K     | Uvula                  | "K" produced at the very back of the throat — lower than English K |