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**Amine Bouchentouf**

Author of Living Language  
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# ***Arabic For Dummies®***

**by Amine Bouchentouf**



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# About the Author

**Amine Bouchentouf** is a native English, Arabic, and French speaker born and raised in Casablanca, Morocco. Amine has been teaching Arabic and lecturing about relations between America and the Arab world in his spare time for over 4 years and has offered classes and seminars for students at Middlebury College, the Council on Foreign Relations, and various schools across the United States. He runs and maintains the Web site [www.al-baab.com](http://www.al-baab.com) (which means “gateway” in Arabic).

Amine graduated from Middlebury College and has always been interested in promoting better relations between the West and the Middle East through dialogue and mutual understanding. Amine published his first book, *Arabic: A Complete Course* (Random House), soon after graduating college in order to help Americans understand Arabic language and culture. He has written *Arabic For Dummies* in an attempt to reach an even wider audience with the aim of fostering better relations through education.

He holds a degree in Economics from Middlebury and has extensive experience in the arena of international investing. He is a registered investment advisor and is a member of the National Association of Securities Dealers. Amine is currently working on his third book, *Investing in Commodities For Dummies* (Wiley Publishing).

Amine is an avid traveler and has visited over 15 countries across the Middle East, Europe, and North and South America. Aside from his interest in languages, business, and travel, Amine enjoys biking, rollerblading, playing guitar, chess, and golf. He lives in New York City.

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to my greatest and most steadfast supporters — my family. To my mother for her infinite and unwavering support, and to my sister, Myriam, for her enthusiasm and passion — you are my greatest inspirations.

To my father and grandfather, may you rest in peace, thank you for instilling in me such a deep respect and awareness of my roots and culture. I am honored to be part of the Bouchentouf family.

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mumtaaz!

al-Hamdu li-llah

inshaa' allah

mabruk!

bi 'idni allah

bi SaHHa

taHiyyaat

muballagh

tabaaraka allah

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al-'amthaal noor al-kalaam.

'a'mal khayr wa 'ilqahu fii al-baHr.

'uTlubuu al-'ilm min al-mahd 'ilaa al-laHd.

yad waaHida maa tusaffiq.

al-Harbaa' laa Yughaadir shajaratuh hattaa yakun mu'akkid 'an shajara 'ukhraa.

khaTa' ma'roof 'aHsan min Haqiiqa ghayr ma'roofa.

as-sirr mithel al-Hamaama: 'indamaa yughaadir yadii yaTiir.

al-'aql li an-niDHaar wa al-kalb li as-simaa'.

[kul yawm min Hayaatuk SafHa min taariikhuk.](#)

[li faatik bi liila faatik bi Hiila.](#)

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# Introduction

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Arabic, the official language of over 20 countries, is the mother tongue of over 300 million people. It's spoken throughout the Middle East, from Morocco to Iraq. Additionally, because Arabic is the language of the Koran and Islam, it's understood by more than 1.2 billion people across the world.

Due to recent geopolitical events, Arabic has catapulted to the top of the list of important world languages. Even in countries where Arabic isn't the official language, people are scrambling to master this important and vital global language.

For people in North America and Europe, at first glance Arabic seems like a difficult language to master; after all, it isn't a Romance language and doesn't use the Latin alphabet. However, like any other language, Arabic is governed by a set of rules, and when you master these rules, you're able to speak Arabic like a native speaker!

*Arabic For Dummies* is designed to identify and explain the rules that govern the Arabic language in the easiest and most interactive way possible. I organize each chapter in a straightforward and coherent manner and present the material in an interactive and engaging way.

## About This Book

Unlike most books on the Arabic language, *Arabic For Dummies* is designed in a way that gives you the most accurate and in-depth information available on the composition of the language. The book is modular in nature; every chapter is organized in such a way that you don't have to read the whole book in order to understand the topic that's discussed. Feel free to jump through chapters and sections to suit your specific needs. Also, every grammatical and linguistic point is explained in plain English so that you can incorporate the concept immediately. I took great care to explain every concept clearly and succinctly.

To provide the best foundation and the widest usage for students of Arabic, *Arabic For Dummies* focuses on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is the most widely used form of Arabic in the world. There are basically three different types of Arabic: Koranic Arabic, local dialects, and MSA.

✓ **Koranic Arabic** is the Arabic used to write the Koran, the holy book for Muslims. This form of Arabic is very rigid and hasn't changed much since the Koran was written approximately 1,500 years ago. Koranic Arabic is widely used in religious circles for prayer, discussions of Islamic issues, and serious deliberations. Its usage is limited primarily within a strict religious context. It's the equivalent of Biblical English.

✓ **The regional dialects** are the most informal type of Arabic. They tend to fall into three geographical categories: the North African dialect (Morocco,

Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya); the Egyptian dialect (Egypt, parts of Syria, Palestine, and Jordan); and Gulf Arabic (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates). Even though the words are pronounced differently and some of the everyday expressions differ dramatically from region to region, speakers from different regions can understand each other. The common denominator for the regional dialects is that they're all based on MSA.

✓ **Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)** is the most widely used and understood form of Arabic in the world. It's less rigid than Koranic Arabic but a bit more formal than the local dialects. MSA is the language that Arabic anchors use to present the news, professionals use to discuss business and technical issues, and friends and families use to socialize with one another.

## Conventions Used in This Book

Throughout the book, each new Arabic word appears in **boldface**, followed by its proper pronunciation and its English equivalent in parentheses.

Because this is a language book, I include some sections to help you master the linguistic concepts with greater ease. Here's a description of the specialty sections you find in each chapter:

✓ **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** Here's where you get to see Arabic in action. These common Arabic dialogues show you how to use important vocabulary words and terms you should be aware of. Select Talkin' the Talk dialogues have accompanying audio versions on the book's CD.

✓ **Words to Know blackboards:** An important part of mastering a new language is becoming familiar with important words and phrases. Key terms that I recommend you memorize are included in these sections, which present the transcription of the Arabic word, the pronunciation, and the translation.

✓ **Fun & Games activities:** The aim of *Arabic For Dummies* is to help you master the Arabic language in an interactive and engaging way. With that in mind, each chapter ends with a Fun & Games that lets you review the key concept covered in the chapter in a fun but effective way.

## What I Assume About You

In writing *Arabic For Dummies*, I made the following assumptions about my likely readers:

✓ You've had very little exposure (or none at all) to the Arabic language.

✓ You're interested in mastering Arabic for either personal or professional reasons.

✓ You want to be able to speak a few words and phrases so that you can communicate basic information in Arabic.



✓ You've been exposed to Arabic but are interested in brushing up on your language skills.

✓ You're not looking for a dry book on Arabic grammar; you want to discover Arabic in a fun and engaging manner.

✓ You're looking for a practical course that will have you speaking basic Arabic in no time!

# How This Book Is Organized

*Arabic For Dummies* is organized into five different parts, with each part divided into chapters. The following part descriptions give you a heads-up on what to expect in each part.

# Part I: Getting Started

The first part of *Arabic For Dummies* is a must-read if you've never been exposed to Arabic. I introduce the Arabic script and present the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet before explaining the difference between consonants and vowels, which have a very peculiar relationship in Arabic. In addition, in this part you get a detailed and thorough overview of Arabic grammatical and linguistic constructs; for instance, you find out how nouns, verbs, and adjectives interact with each other to create phrases and sentences. Finally, you discover some of the most basic forms of greetings and are introduced to basic words and phrases.

## **Part II: Arabic in Action**

This part exposes you to key words and phrases that allow you to interact with Arabic-speaking folks in a variety of different settings (such as in a restaurant, around town, at the office, or even at the mall). You discover how to make small talk and how to ask for basic information about people you speak to, such as their names, where they're from, and their occupations.

## **Part III: Arabic on the Go**

This part gives you the tools you need to take Arabic on the road with you. Find out how to open a bank account, how to plan a trip, how to make a reservation at a hotel, and how to ask for directions.