

25 verbs, three tenses

One pattern, three tenses, the 25 most useful verbs,
five exercises. Say every form out loud.

NAME _____

DATE _____

A. ONE VERB, THREE TENSES

KATAB / YIKTIB · TO WRITE

Egyptian verbs have a past form and a present form. Everything else is a prefix: **bi-** for now and habits, **ha-** for the future. Learn this grid and you can conjugate most verbs.

PERSON	PAST	PRESENT (BI-)	FUTURE (HA-)	ARABIC (PRESENT)
ana I	katabt	baktib	haktib	بكتب
enta you (m)	katabt	bitiktib	hatiktib	بتكتب
enti you (f)	katabti	bitiktibi	hatiktibi	بتكتبي
huwwa he	katab	biyiktib	hayiktib	بيكتب
hiyya she	katabit	bitiktib	hatiktib	بتكتب
ehna we	katabna	biniktib	haniktib	بنكتب
entu you (pl)	katabtu	bitiktibu	hatiktibu	بتكتبوا
humma they	katabu	biyiktibu	hayiktibu	بيكتبوا

Notice: **enta** and **hiyya** share one present form (bitiktib); **ana** and **enta** share one past form (katabt). Context does the rest.

bi- = now and habits

baktib = I write and I am writing.
bashrab 'ahwa kull yom = I drink coffee every day.

Drop **bi-** after 'ayiz, lazim, mumkin: 'ayiz **aktib**, lazim **aruh**, mumkin **ashrab**?

ha- = future

Swap **bi-** for **ha-**: **hakallimak bukra** = I'll call you tomorrow.
hanruh masr es-seif = we're going to Egypt this summer.

The bare present asks for a decision: **aruh dilwa'ti?** = shall I go now?

Negation: ma- ... -sh

Wrap the verb: **makatabtish** (I didn't write), **mabaktibsh** (I don't write).

Future and non-verbs take **mish** in front: **mish haktib**, **mish 'ayiz**, **mish masri**, **mish hena**.

IMPERATIVE

ADD -I TO A WOMAN, -U TO A GROUP

ruh! go (f: ruhi) · **ta'ala!** come (f: ta'ali) · **kul!** eat (f: kuli) · **ishrab!** drink (f: ishrabi) · **isma'!** listen (f: isma'i) · **'ul!** say (f: 'uli). Negative command: **matruhsh!** don't go.

Ex. 1 Complete the grid: shirib / yishrab (to drink)

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Three forms are given in green. Fill in the rest with the pattern of katab above. Say each form as you write it.

PERSON	PAST	PRESENT (BI-)	FUTURE (HA-)
ana	shiribt		
enta			
enti			
huwwa		biyishrab	
hiyya			
ehna			hanishrab
entu			
humma			

B. THE 25 VERBS

• = IRREGULAR

Past and present are given for **huwwa** (he), the form dictionaries use. Build the others with the grid on page 1. Tick a verb once you can say both forms without looking.

ENGLISH	PAST (HE)	PRESENT (HE)	ARABIC	EXAMPLE
☐ go	rah •	biyruh	بيروح	baruh esh-shughl I go to work
☐ come	gih •	biyigi	بييجي	hiyya gat imbarih she came yesterday
☐ do, make	'amal	biyi'mil	بيعمل	biti'mil eh? what are you doing?
☐ eat	kal •	biyakul	بياكل	kalt kushari I ate kushari
☐ drink	shirib	biyishrab	بيشرب	bashrab shay I drink tea
☐ know	'irif	biyi'raf	بيعرف	ma'rafsh I don't know
☐ want	kan 'ayiz	'ayiz / 'ayza	عايز	'ayiz mayya I want water (no bi-, works like an adjective)

☐ say	'al •	biy'ul	يقول	'ult eh? what did you say?
☐ see	shaf •	biyshuf	يشوف	shuft el-film? did you see the film?
☐ speak	itkallim	biyitkallim	يتكلم	batkallim 'arabi shwayya I speak a little Arabic
☐ understand	fihim	biyifham	يفهم	fihimt! got it!
☐ learn	it'allim	biyit'allim	يتعلم	bat'allim masri I'm learning Egyptian
☐ work	ishtaghal	biyishtaghal	يشتغل	bitishtaghal fein? where do you work?
☐ live (reside)	sikin	biyuskun	يسكن	sakin fi berlin I live in Berlin (participle, very common)
☐ sleep	nam •	biynam	ينام	nimt badri I slept early
☐ wake up	sihi	biyisha	يصحى	basha s-sa'a sab'a I wake up at seven
☐ buy	ishtara	biyishtiri	يشتري	ishtareit 'eish I bought bread
☐ pay	dafa'	biyidfa'	يدفع	ana hadfa' I'll pay
☐ take	khad •	biyakhud	ياخد	khud taksi take a taxi
☐ give	idda •	biyiddi	بيدي	iddini el-hisab give me the bill
☐ love, like	habb	biyhibb	يحب	bahibb el-mulukhiyya I love mulukhiyya
☐ read	'ara	biyi'ra	يقرأ	ba'ra 'arabi I read Arabic
☐ write	katab	biyiktib	يكتب	iktib ismak write your name
☐ walk	mishi	biyimshi	يمشي	namshi? shall we go? (lit. walk)
☐ can, be able	'idir	biyi'dar	يقدر	ma'darsh I can't

The irregular ones •

- **Hollow verbs** (a long vowel in the middle) shorten it before a consonant ending: rah → **ruht** (I went), shaf → **shuft**, nam → **nimt**, 'al → **'ult**. The present keeps the long vowel: baruh, bashuf, banam, ba'ul.
- **kal, khad** (eat, take) have a short past: kalt, khadt; the present is bakul, bakhud. **gih** (come) is the odd one out: geit (I came), gat (she came), present bagi, biyigi.
- **idda** (give): past iddeit, iddit (she); present baddi, biyiddi. The ending -a of the past becomes -eit for ana/enta.

C. EXERCISES**Ex. 2 Past, now or future?**

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Tick P (past), N (now / habit) or F (future). The prefix tells you.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 hashuf el-film bukra. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F | 2 bashrab 'ahwa kull yom. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F |
| 3 ruht masr es-sana elli fatit. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F | 4 hiyya bitishtaghal fi bank. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F |
| 5 kalna kushari imbarih. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F | 6 hanitkallim 'arabi ba'd sana. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F |
| 7 humma biyi'rafu el-gawab. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F | 8 ishtareit 'eish es-subh. ☐ P ☐ N ☐ F |

Ex. 3 Change the tense

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Rewrite the verb in the tense in brackets.

- 1 bakul (past) → _____
- 2 shuft (future) → _____
- 3 haruh (now) → _____
- 4 hiyya katabit (now) → _____
- 5 binam (past) → _____
- 6 entu dafa'tu (future) → _____

Ex. 4 Say no

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Negate each sentence. ma-...-sh or mish?

- 1 baktib → _____
- 2 haruh → _____
- 3 'andi wa't → _____
- 4 huwwa 'ayiz → _____
- 5 shuft → _____
- 6 hiyya bitishtaghal → _____

Ex. 5 Your day

Write five sentences about yourself: two about yesterday (past), two about every day (bi-), one about tomorrow (ha-). Use at least five different verbs from page 2.

1 • IMBARIH (YESTERDAY)

2 · IMBARIH

3 · KULL YOM (EVERY DAY)

4 · KULL YOM

5 · BUKRA (TOMORROW)

With a partner: ask **'amalt eh imbarih?** (what did you do yesterday?) and **hati'mil eh bukra?** (what will you do tomorrow?). Note one answer each, then switch.

PARTNER · IMBARIH

PARTNER · BUKRA

Done? Speaking check

- ☐ I said the whole katab grid out loud, all three tenses.
- ☐ I can say past and present of 15 verbs from page 2 without looking.
- ☐ I told my partner (or my mirror) my five sentences from Ex. 5 without reading.

Answer key

For teachers and self-learners. Remove this page before handing the sheet out in class.

Ex. 1 **Past:** shiribt · shiribt · shiribti · shirib · shirbit · shiribna · shiribtu · shirbu · **Present:** bashrab · bitishrab · bitishrabi · biyishrab · bitishrab · binishrab · bitishrabu · biyishrabu · **Future:** hashrab · hatishrab · hatishrabi · hayishrab · hatishrab · hanishrab · hatishrabu · hayishrabu. (Note the dropped vowel in shirbit and shirbu; accept shiribit / shiribu as well.)

Ex. 2 1 F · 2 N · 3 P · 4 N · 5 P · 6 F · 7 N · 8 P

Ex. 3 1 kalt · 2 hashuf · 3 baruh · 4 hiyya bitiktib · 5 nimt · 6 entu hatidfa'u

Ex. 4 1 mabaktibsh · 2 mish haruh · 3 ma'andish wa't · 4 huwwa mish 'ayiz · 5 mashuftish · 6 hiyya mabtishtaghalsh

Ex. 5 Open answer. A model: 1 imbarih ruht esh-shughl. · 2 kalt kushari wi shiribt shay. · 3 kull yom basha s-sa'a sab'a. · 4 bat'allim masri kull yom. · 5 bukra hashuf film ma'a sahbi.

TEACHER'S NOTES

- Timing: about 50 minutes for the full sheet. It splits well into two lessons: tenses (A, B, Ex. 1 to 3) and negation plus speaking (Ex. 4 and 5).
- Drill the katab grid chorally before Ex. 1: you say the person, the class says all three forms. Then let pairs do the same with shirib before anyone writes.
- Ex. 4 is the key exercise. The ma-...-sh wrap around verbs versus mish in front of everything else is the one negation rule beginners need, and it is the one they get wrong longest.
- Common mistake: keeping bi- after 'ayiz, lazim and mumkin ('ayiz baktib). Correct it every time: 'ayiz aktib. The second common mistake is using the Fusha future (sa-/sawfa) instead of ha-.
- Transliteration follows common Egyptian usage, not an academic standard: ' = glottal stop (the Cairo ق), ' = 'ayn, g = ج, kh as in Scottish "loch".

NEXT WORKSHEET

Worksheet 6: The 200 most common words, grouped by function, with a 7-day plan and three self-test columns. Free at yallahspeak.com/worksheets/egyptian-arabic.

To tell an AI partner about your day in Egyptian Arabic and get your verb forms corrected as you speak, try the Yallah Speak app (free to start, iOS and Android).