

Greetings & meeting people

Hello, how are you, thank you and goodbye in the Arabic of Damascus. Vocabulary, pronunciation, a café dialogue and five exercises. Read every Arabic line out loud.

NAME _____

DATE _____

A. VOCABULARY

(M) TO A MAN · (F) TO A WOMAN · (PL) TO A GROUP

Tick the box once you can say the phrase from the English alone. Learn the (m) form first; in most phrases only the ending changes for a woman.

GREETINGS & GOODBYES

ENGLISH	ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION
☐ Hello	مرحبا	marhaba reply: marhabtein or ahlein
☐ Hi / welcome	أهلا وسهلا	ahlan w sahlān reply: ahlan fik (m) · fiki (f) · fikon (pl)
☐ Peace be upon you (formal hello)	السلام عليكم	es-salamu 'aleikum reply: w 'aleikum es-salam
☐ Good morning	صباح الخير	sabah el-kheir reply: sabah en-nur
☐ Good evening	مساء الخير	masa el-kheir reply: masa en-nur
☐ How are you?	كيفك؟	kifak? (m) · kifek? (f) · kifkon? (pl)
☐ Good, thank God. And you?	منيح الحمد لله، وإنت؟	mnih el-hamdilla, w-enta? (f) mniha ... w-enti?
☐ Goodbye	مع السلامة	ma' es-salame reply: allah ma'ak (m) · ma'ek (f)
☐ Good night	تصبح على خير	tesbah 'ala kheir (f) tesbahi · reply: w-enta min ahlo

MEETING SOMEONE

ENGLISH	ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION
☐ What's your name?	شو اسمك؟	shu ismak? (m) · shu ismek? (f)
☐ My name is ...	أنا اسمي ...	ana ismi ...

☐ Nice to meet you	تشرفنا	tsharrafna literally "we are honoured"
☐ Where are you from?	إنت من وين؟	enta min wein? (m) • enti min wein? (f)
☐ I'm from Germany	أنا من ألمانيا	ana min almanya
☐ I'm learning Arabic	عم إتعلم عربي	'am et'allam 'arabi
☐ Do you know English?	بتعرف إنكليزي؟	bta'ref inglizi? (f) bta'rfi
☐ I didn't understand you	ما فهمت عليك	ma fhemt 'aleik (m) • 'aleiki (f)
☐ Slowly, please	شوي شوي إذا بتريد	shwei shwei iza betrid (f) betridi

B. PRONUNCIATION

Four sounds that make it Damascene

- ق is a glottal stop, the small catch in the middle of "uh-oh". Written ' in this sheet. Coffee is 'ahwe, not "qahwa".
- ج is soft, like the s in "pleasure". Written j: **jamil** (beautiful) sounds like "zhamil".
- The final -a of many words turns into -e: **ma' es-salame, mushkle, 'ahwe**. After throat sounds it stays -a: **mniha, sab'a**.
- ع (') is a sound from deep in the throat. For now, say a deep "a" and keep going: 'arabi, 'aleikum.

A. VOCABULARY (CONTINUED)

SMALL WORDS YOU WILL USE EVERY HOUR

ENGLISH	ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION
☐ Yes / no	إي / لا	eh / la'
☐ Okay, fine	طيب / تمام	tayyeb / tamam
☐ Let's go, come on	يلا	yalla
☐ Very, a lot	كثير	ktir mnih ktir = very good
☐ Really?	عن جد؟	'an jadd?
☐ Sorry	آسف	asef (m) • asfe (f)

☐ No problem	ما في مشكلة	ma fi mushkle
☐ Please, go ahead, here you are	تفضل	tfaddal (m) · tfaddali (f) · tfaddalu (pl)

THANK YOU & YOU'RE WELCOME

DAMASCUS HAS MORE THAN ONE OF EACH

ENGLISH	ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION
☐ Thank you	شكراً	shukran you will also hear mersi
☐ Thanks (warm, everyday)	يسلمو	yeslamu
☐ Bless your hands (for food or help)	يسلمو إيديك	yeslamu ideik (m) · ideiki (f)
☐ You're welcome	عفواً	'afwan
☐ Don't mention it	ولو	walau
☐ With pleasure (to a request)	تكرم	tekram (m) · tekrami (f)

C. EXERCISES

Ex. 1 Match the situation to the phrase

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Write the letter next to each situation.

1. You walk into a shop in the morning. _____	A	tsharrafna	تشرفنا
2. Someone asks how you are. _____	B	ma' es-salame	مع السلامة
3. You have just been introduced. _____	C	sabah el-kheir	صباح الخير
4. Someone speaks too fast. _____	D	shwei shwei iza betrid	شوي شوي إذا بتريد
5. Someone bumps into you, says sorry. _____	E	mnih el-hamdilla	منيح الحمد لله
6. You leave the café. _____	F	ma fi mushkle	ما في مشكلة

Ex. 2 Fill the gaps

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Use each word from the box once.

wein	ismak	mnih	kifek	eh	ana
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A marhaba, _____ ? B _____ el-hamdilla, w-enta?

A enta min _____ ? B ana min Halab.

A shu _____ ? B _____ ismi Karim.

A enta min Halab? B _____ , min Halab.

Ex. 3 Man or woman?

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Each line is said to a man. Rewrite it so it is said to a woman. The first one is done for you.

0 kifak? → kifek?

1 shu ismak? → _____

2 enta min wein? → _____

3 bta' ref inglizi? → _____

4 iza betrid → _____

5 tesbah 'ala kheir → _____

D. DIALOGUE: AT A CAFÉ IN OLD DAMASCUS

Sara is learning Arabic. Samir runs a small café near the Hamidiyya souq. Read the dialogue twice out loud with a partner, once as Sara and once as Samir. Then answer the questions below.

Samir أهلا وسهلا! تفضللي. **ahlan w sahan! tfaddali.**
Welcome! Have a seat.

Sara أهلا فيك. لو سمحت، بدي كاسة شاي. **ahlan fik. law samaht, baddi kaset shai.**
Thank you. A glass of tea, please.

Samir تكرمي. إنت من وين؟ **tekrami. enti min wein?**
With pleasure. Where are you from?

Sara أنا من ألمانيا. عم إتعلم عربي. **ana min almanya. 'am et'allam 'arabi.**
I'm from Germany. I'm learning Arabic.

Samir عن جد؟ بتحكي منيح كتير! **'an jadd? btehki mnih ktir!**
Really? You speak very well!

Sara لا، لسا. شوي شوي إذا بتريد. **la, lessa. shwei shwei iza betrid.**
No, not yet. Slowly, please.

Samir	طيب، طيب. شو اسمك؟	tayyeb, tayyeb. shu ismek? Okay, okay. What's your name?
Sara	أنا اسمي سارة. وإنت؟	ana ismi Sara. w-enta? My name is Sara. And you?
Samir	سمير. تشرفنا يا سارة.	Samir. tsharrafna ya Sara. Samir. Nice to meet you, Sara.
Sara	يسلمو إيديك، الشاي طيب كتير.	yeslamu ideik, esh-shai tayyeb ktir. Thank you, the tea is really good.
Samir	ولو! مع السلامة.	walau! ma' es-salame. Don't mention it! Goodbye.
Sara	الله معك!	allah ma'ak! Goodbye! (literally "God be with you")

Ex. 4 Understanding the dialogue

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Answer in English or in Arabic.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. What does Sara order?
_____ | 3. Why does Sara say "shwei shwei iza betrid"?
_____ |
| 2. Where is Sara from?
_____ | 4. Find the phrase Samir uses for "really?".
_____ |

Ex. 5 Your turn: introduce yourself

Write four lines about yourself, using the phrases from section A. Then say them out loud three times without reading, or to your partner, who answers each line.

1 · GREETING AND "HOW ARE YOU?"

2 · YOUR NAME

3 · WHERE FROM, AND THAT YOU LEARN ARABIC

4 · NICE TO MEET YOU, THANKS, GOODBYE

Done? Speaking check

- ☐ I said every phrase in section A out loud at least three times.
- ☐ I read the dialogue as Sara and as Samir.
- ☐ I said my introduction from Ex. 5 without reading it.

Answer key

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

Ex. 1 1 C · 2 E · 3 A · 4 D · 5 F · 6 B

Ex. 2 kifek (kifak also accepted) · mnih · wein · ismak · ana · eh

Ex. 3 1 shu ismek? · 2 enti min wein? · 3 bta'rfi inglizi? · 4 iza betridi · 5 tesbahi 'ala kheir

Ex. 4 1 A glass of tea (kaset shai). · 2 Germany (almanya). · 3 Samir speaks too fast; she asks him to speak slowly. · 4 'an jadd?

Ex. 5 Open answer. A model answer: marhaba! kifak? · ana ismi Lina. · ana min almanya w 'am et'allam 'arabi. · tsharrafna! yeslamu. ma' es-salame.

TEACHER'S NOTES

- Timing: about 45 minutes for the full sheet, or section A plus the dialogue as a 20-minute warm-up.
- The dialogue works well in pairs. Swap roles after the first read. On the second read, students replace Sara's name and country with their own.
- Ex. 3 is the key exercise: the (m)/(f) ending (kifak / kifek, iza betrid / betridi) is the one grammar point beginners need from day one. Add the group forms orally: kifkon? tfaddalu.
- "'am et'allam" previews the 'am + present tense for "doing right now", typical of Damascus and Beirut. Treat it as a fixed phrase here; verbs come in worksheet 4.
- Learners who know Fusha say kayfa haluk or ismuka ma. Correct gently to kifak and shu ismak. In Damascus you will also hear shlonak? (m) / shlonek? (f) for "how are you".
- Transliteration: ' = glottal stop (the Damascus ق), ' = 'ayn, j = the s in "pleasure", kh as in Scottish "loch", e = short e as in "bed".

NEXT WORKSHEET

Worksheet 2: Numbers, prices & time. Count to 1000, ask "'addeish?" at the souq and tell the time. Free at yallahspeak.com/worksheets/syrian-arabic.

To practise this dialogue with an AI partner who answers in Syrian Arabic and corrects your pronunciation word by word, try the Yallah Speak app (free to start, iOS and Android).