2

Letters

1

ل *lām*

The letter called *lām* represents the sound *l*. Pronounce it *light*, as in English 'leaf', not *dark* as in 'wall'. *lām* looks like an English handwritten letter *l* written in the opposite direction. *lām* is a joined* letter; the short and full forms are used exactly like those of any joined letter, e.g. ب *bā* which we already know. However, both forms of *lām* are tall*; the isolated full form* rests more or less on the line of writing, while the joined full form is also deep*, swinging clockwise below the line and up.

* Look again at Lesson 1 for the usage of these terms, if you are unsure.

Write this letter several times:

ل ل ل ل ل ل ل ل

ل ل ل ل ل ل ل ل

You might think that *álif* and the short form of *lām* get confused; in practice this is not so. *álif* is disjoined, *lām* is joined, and there is never confusion. Look, for example, at *thálith* 'third' below.

Read and write:

ثالث ثالث *thálith* third

لبناني لبناني *lubnánī* Lebanese

لي لي *lī* to me, for me

ابل ابل *íbil* camels

لبنان لبنان *lubnán* Lebanon

Open *S6.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

The combination *lām* + *álif* has special forms. In print and type, the *álif* is sloped and joined to the *lām* at the latter's middle. In handwriting, we *break* the joint, and may either slope the *álif* or leave it upright. In both cases, the *álif* is written downwards. Look at these forms:

	handwriting	*print and type*
not following a joined letter	لا لا	لا
following a joined letter	لا لا	لا

Imitate one of the handwritten forms in each case.

Open *W6.pps* to watch the handwriting of آلات *ālát*, listed below.

Now **read and write**:

ثلاث ثلاث *thaláth* three

آلات آلات *ālát* tools *W6*

لا لا *lā* no

Open *S7.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

Always write *lām-álif* as shown above. You may see the printed or calligraphic form لا for *lām-álif*. This is a rare form, not to be imitated in handwriting.

The break in the connection of handwritten *lām-álif* does not mean that the *lām* has suddenly become a disjoined letter; it is merely a peculiarity of handwritten style. The *álif* is still deemed to be part of the ligature, and is therefore written immediately after the *lām* and before any detached form (see 1/3) accompanying the ligature.

2

مـ م *mīm*

The sound *m* (as in English 'me'), is written with the letter called *mīm*. This letter is joined. Its two forms are used exactly as are the two forms of the other joined letters. Its short form is shallow, while the full form is deep with a straight downward tail. The 'bead' of both forms rests on the line of writing.

In handwriting, when *mīm* is not joined to a preceding letter (i.e. to its right), its bead can be written clockwise↻, or anticlockwise↺. **Write** this letter several times:

م مـ مـ م مـ مـ م مـ مـ م مـ مـ م

صـ مـ م صـ مـ م صـ مـ م صـ مـ م

Read and write:

من مِن *min* from امام اِمام *amā́m* in front of

Open *S8.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat.**

But when *mīm* is joined to a preceding letter we approach the bead from the top, and write it anticlockwise↺. This gives us special combinations after certain letters, which may or may not be used in print, but which are always used in handwriting. **Copy** the handwritten forms:

	handwriting	*print and type*	
tooth + *mīm*	ـمـ	ـمـ \ مـ	ـمـ \ مـ
teeth + *mīm*	ـسـ	سـ	سـ
lām + *mīm*	ـلـ	لـ \ مـ	لـ \ مـ
mīm + *mīm*	ـمـ	مـ	مـ \ مـ

Open *W7.pps* to watch the handwriting of تمام *tamā́m*, listed below.

Now **read and write:**

تمام تمام *tamā́m* perfect *W7* نمل نَمل *naml* ants

الماني الماني *almā́nī* German انتم اَنتم *ántum* you (plural)

Open *S9.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat.**

Exercise 1 Match these words with their sound and their English meaning given in the list below. The first one is done for you:

(a) الماني *almā́nī* German (b) تمام (c) ثالث (d) ثلاث

thā́lith, thalā́th, tamā́m; perfect, third, three

Exercise 2 Fill in or complete the word with the correct handwritten form of *lām-álif*:

(a) ثـ...ـث (b) آ...ـت (c) 'No' .....

Exercise 3 The consul has got the nationalities mixed. Sort them out:

(a) الماني (b) ياباني (c) لبناني (d) ليبي

Japanese, Lebanese, Libyan, German; *almā́nī, lī́bī, yābā́nī, lubnā́nī*

(One of these words is new, but you can handle it.)

The answers to these exercises follow paragraph 5 below.

3

و *wow*

The letter called *wow* is deep and disjoined (you know what that means now). It has only one form, with a downward swing. **Write** it several times, starting with the ring, written *clockwise* and resting on the line of writing:

و و و و و و و و و و

The letter *wow* represents the following sounds:

- at the beginning of a word: the consonant *w-* (like English w in 'weak').
- in the middle of a word: either the consonant *-w-* (see above), or the long vowel *-ū-* (as u in English 'truth'), or the vowel-combination *-ow-* (as in English 'down').
- at the end of a word: either the long vowel *-ū* or (less often) the combination *-ow*.

In some words of foreign origin (e.g. *rādiō*) و is pronounced *ō* (as in English 'go').

The letter *wow* is never pronounced like u in English 'union'.

Look back to 1/6 (Lesson 1, paragraph 6), the description of *yā*, very similar to the description given above for *wow*. Both letters are used to represent a consonant, or a long vowel, or a vowel-combination, in corresponding positions.

Open *W8.pps* to watch the handwriting of يونيو *yűniyū*, listed below.

Now **read and write** (remember that initial *wow* must be *w-*, middle *wow* can be *-w-*, *-ū-* or *-ow-* and final *wow* is *-ū* or, less often, *-ow*):

ثانوي	*thắnawī* secondary	و	*wa* and
يوم	*yowm* day	لون	*lown* colour
يوليو	*yűliyū* July	يونيو	*yűniyū* June *W8*
ممنون	*mamnűn* grateful	بيوت	*buyűt* houses
مايو	*mắyū* May	تمويل	*tamwĩl* financing

Open *S10.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

In 1/6 (Initial vowel rule) we learned that initial long *ā-* is written آ *(álif mádda)*. Any other initial vowel or vowel-combination must be introduced by *álif* in writing. This rule applies equally to the sounds *ū-* and *ow-* beginning a word; both these sounds in this situation are written ... او . **Read and write:**

او او *ow* or

Open *S11.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

Doubled letters

4 When we have two identical letters separated by a vowel (long or short) then we write both letters: in the word ممنون *mamnűn* 'grateful' (shown above) we have two examples: (*m* + short vowel + *m*) and (*n* + long vowel + *n*). Whether the vowel is short and unwritten or long and written makes no difference; there is a vowel, and the two identical letters are shown.

But when we have a *doubled* letter, i.e. two identical letters with no intervening vowel, we write only one letter.

Read and write:

ممثل *mumá**thth**il** representative اول *á**ww**al* first

* Remember that the transcription symbol *th* represents a single consonant in Arabic, ث.

Open *S12.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

Doubled letter rule: Letters which are sounded double (i.e. with no intervening vowel) are written single.

Although we write the doubled letter single, it is important to *pronounce* it doubled, i.e. hold it for longer before releasing it. We have this phenomenon in English, in 'black cat', 'dirt-track' or 'lamppost'. The two Arabic words shown above sound as if transcribed *áw-wal* and *mumáth-thil*.
There is a way of showing doubled letters in script. It is the non-alphabetical sign called

ّ ***shádda***

This sign can be written above any letter to show that it is doubled. It is, however, often omitted; we shall show it frequently.

Open *W9.pps* to watch the handwriting of ممثّل *mumáththil*, listed below.
Now **read and write**, distinguishing single letters from doubled. Write the supporting ligature first, then any dots, then the *shádda*, which is a detached form (see 1/3).

لمّا *lámma* when — لمن *li-mán* whose
ممثّل *mumáththil* representative *W9* — مثل *mithl* like
تلّ *tall* hill — تلال *tilál* hills

Open *S13.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

Exercise 4 Put *shádda* wherever it is appropriate, and pronounce the word. The first one is done:
(a) ممثّل *mumáththil* representative (b) تمويل (c) اول (d) ممنون
Give the English meaning of each word.
The answers to this exercise follow paragraph 5 below.



Definite article – the

5 The important word 'the' is called the *definite article*, or more simply the *article*. We use it before a *noun* (i.e. a word denoting a person, creature, place, thing or idea). In Arabic, it takes the form ...ال, which is always attached to the word which it 'defines', i.e. makes definite. In the transcription we attach it with a hyphen, for clarity; you should pronounce the whole expression as one word. **Read and write:**

البيت *al-báyt* the house

البنات *al-banáːt* the daughters

Open *S14.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

The article is used in Arabic more often than is 'the' in English; it is very common with geographical terms, and with words used in a general or universal meaning. **Read and write:**

اليابان *al-yābáːn* Japan

الموت *al-mówt* ('the') death (in general)

Open *S15.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

al- is the normal pronunciation of the article. But when the defined word begins with a sound pronounced with the tip or near-tip of the tongue, the *l* merges with (the technical term is 'assimilates to') that sound, producing a doubled sound. The spelling stays the same †.

In everyday (i.e. non-tutorial) text *shádda* is very often omitted. We show it on the letter following the article only in this lesson; but we shall show it in other positions, i.e. the *middle* or *end* of the word, very frequently throughout the book. Look carefully first at the spelling and pronunciation of the following expressions, then **read and write** them:

التّلّ *at-táll* (not *[al-]*) the hill

التّلال *at-tilāl* the hills

الثّالث *ath-thálith* the third (one)

النّيل *an-nīl* the Nile

Open *S16.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

When the defined word itself begins with *lām*, the two letters *lām* are written together (NB with no *shádda*, even though there is no intervening vowel). This is an exception to the Doubled letter rule (paragraph 4 above). **Read and write:**

اللون *al-lówn* the colour

اللبناني *al-lubnáːnī* the Lebanese (person)

Open *S17.wav*. **Read, listen and repeat**.

There are fourteen letters which have this effect on the *l* of the article. So far we have learned four of them: ت, ث, ن and ل. The fourteen letters concerned have the picturesque name 'sun letters'. We shall point out the remaining ten sun letters as we meet them. The important thing to remember is that when a word beginning with a sun letter carries the article we pronounce as doubled the initial sun letter, dropping the *l* of the article in pronunciation but not in spelling.

The article ...ال never affects the stress of the word, and never takes the stress itself. Note also that in entering or looking up a word in a list (e.g. vocabulary, telephone book), the article is ignored. For example, we do not search for البيت *al-báyt* but بيت *bayt*.

Final note: the ...ال of المانى *almáːnī* 'German' is not the article; it is part of the word itself. We learn in Lesson 3 how to add the article to a word like this.

---

† We have a comparable phenomenon in English: we pronounce the vowel of the article 'the' differently according to whether the next word begins with a consonant or a vowel. Contrast the sound of the article in 'the pears' and in 'the apples'. Same spelling, different pronunciation.

Exercise 5 Make each word definite with the article, marking *shádda* wherever it is appropriate. Write your answer, then match it with the transcription and the English meaning. The first one is done:

(a) بيت → البيت *al-báyt* the house (b) ممثل (c) تمويل (d) نبات

an-nabā́t, at-tamwī́l, al-mumáththil (the) financing, the representative, the vegetation

Exercise 6 In your answers to Exercise 5, mark the articles whose *l* assimilates to a sun letter at the beginning of the defined word. Mark *shádda* wherever it is appropriate.

Exercise 7 Why are ا, ب, ي, م and و called 'moon letters', i.e. not sun letters? (Pronounce them, and you will see – or rather, feel – why.)

The answers to these exercises are given immediately below.

Answers to exercises

1 (b) تمام *tamā́m* perfect (c) ثالث *thā́lith* third (d) ثلاث *thalā́th* three

2 (a) ثلاث \ ثلاث (b) آلات \ آلات (c) لا \ لا

3 (a) الماني *almā́nī* German (b) ياباني *yābā́nī* Japanese (c) لبناني *lubnā́nī* Lebanese (d) ليبي *lī́bī* Libyan

4 (b) تمويل *tamwī́l* financing (c) اوّل *áwwal* first (d) ممنون *mamnūn* grateful

5 (b) الممثّل *al-mumáththil* the representative (c) التّمويل *at-tamwī́l* (the) financing (d) النّبات *an-nabā́t* the vegetation

6 (c) التّمويل (d) النّبات

7 Because they are not pronounced with the tip or near-tip of the tongue.

Tests

1 Write the letters as a word, with *shádda* where appropriate. For example, (a) النّيل is الذيل:

(a) الذيل (b) التمويل (c) اول (d) المانيا (e) ممنون

2 Read aloud your handwritten answers to Test 1. For example, (a) is *an-nī́l*.

3 Read aloud. For example, (a) is *lubnā́nī* (NB *shádda* is not shown in these examples):

(a) لبناني (b) اول (c) الثالث (d) ممنون (e) النمل

4 Write, with *shádda* wherever appropriate. For example, (a) is الليبي:

(a) *al-lī́bī* (b) *mumaththiláyn* (c) *at-tamwī́l* (d) *an-nīláyn** (e) *ow* (f) *al-yābā́nī*

(* i.e. two, the Blue and the White. They meet at Khartoum in Sudan.)

5 In the following list, the words اب, البنات and ابن form a group as they all denote family relationships. Assemble the other logical groups, and say why their words belong together. *shádda* on the letter following the article is not shown:

ابن، الماني، الثالث، البنات، يونيو، البيوت، اب، أوّل، ياباني، لبناني، يوليو، البنايات، اثنين، ثلاث، آب، ليبي، مايو.

*