# 7

**Word forms**

**Dual**

**1** You will sometimes see the ending ين... *-ayn* or ان... *-ān* added to a word. This is the so-called 'dual' ending, and it means 'two'. English uses a number for 'two'; Arabic uses also an ending.

Any final ة on the original singular ('s.', 'sing.') word changes to ت, and a final ى (*'alif maqṣūra*, 6/4) changes to ي, before the dual ending is added. The relative ending ي... *-ī* together with the dual ending becomes يين... *-īyayn* or يان... *-īyān*.

**Read and write:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| مديران | *mudīrān* | مديرين | *mudīrayn* |
| مكتبان | *maktabān* | مكتبين | *maktabayn* |
| وزارتان | *wizāratān* | وزارتين | *wizāratayn* |
| شركتان | *sharikatān* | شركتين | *sharikatayn* |
| لبنانيان | *lubnānīyān* | لبنانيين | *lubnānīyayn* |
| مستشفيان | *mustashfayān* | مستشفيين | *mustashfayayn* |

two directors, two offices, two ministries, two companies, two Lebanese (m.), two hospitals

**Open *S43.wav*. Read, listen and repeat.**

Each of the two dual endings is used in a different grammatical context, and the two are not interchangeable. The ين... *-ayn* ending is more common; use it for preference when in doubt. We shall have some guidelines later.

The dual ending is always *stressed*: *-áyn, -ā́n* (Stress rule, 5/4).

**Regular plural endings**

**2** For English, 'plural' means 'more than one', but for Arabic it means 'more than *two*'.

There are two types of endings we can add to Arabic words to make them plural ('pl.').

The commonest plural ending you will meet is ات... *-āt*. This is known as the *feminine* regular plural ending. It is always stressed: *-ā́t* (5/4).

This ending is added to almost all nouns ending in ة, whatever their meaning (the ة is dropped first), and to many other nouns denoting things, places or ideas, whatever their singular ending.

It is also added to the few nouns ending in ى (*'alif maqṣūra*, 6/4), which changes to ي before the plural ending is added. **Read and write:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| انتخابات | *intikhābāt* | انتخاب | *intikhāb* |
| شركات | *sharikāt* | شركة | *sharika* |
| معلّمات | *mu9allimāt* | معلّمة | *mu9allima* |
| مستشفيات | *mustashfayāt* | مستشفى | *mustashfa* |

election(s), company/ies, teacher(s) (f.), hospital(s)

**Open *S44.wav*. Read, listen and repeat.**

The other plural ending, less common, is ين... *-īn*, with its rarer variant ون... *-ūn*.

This ending is added only to a few words denoting male persons. It is known as the *masculine* regular plural ending. This ending is likewise always stressed: *-íːn, -úːn* (5/4).

The relative ending ي... together with this plural ending becomes يين... *-īyíːn* or (less commonly), يون... *-īyúːn*. **Read and write:**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| معلّمون | *mu9allimūn* | معلّمين | معلّمتن | *mu9allimīn* | معلّمتين |
| ممثّلون | *mumaththilūn* | ممثّلين | ممثّلين | *mumaththilīn* | ممثّلين |
| مفتّشون | *mufattishūn* | مفتّشين | مفتّشين | *mufattishīn* | مفتّشين |
| إيطاليون | *'iṭālīyūn* | إيطاليين | إيطاليين | *'iṭālīyīn* | إيطاليين |

teachers, representatives, inspectors, Italians – all masculine

**Open** *S45.wav.* **Read, listen and repeat.**

As with the dual, the two masculine regular plural endings are used in different grammatical contexts, and are not interchangeable. The ين... *-īn* ending is more common; use it for preference when in doubt. We shall have some guidelines later.

**Irregular plurals**

**3** Very many words make their plurals not by adding an ending but by changing their internal shape. We have this phenomenon with a few English words: 'man/men, mouse/mice'. Irregular plural patterns are very common in Arabic. Many such patterns exist, and there are few easy rules. An irregular plural has to be learned with its singular. Some common patterns are listed below.

Even this greatly reduced list can look formidable. Don't try to learn it; take note that such patterns exist, and use the list for reference. The important thing is that when you meet an unfamiliar irregular plural, you check whether you know a singular word with the same three root letters in the same order. If you do, there is a good chance that you have broken the code and identified the meaning. Using a foreign language often involves astute detective work and informed guessing.

**Read and write** these examples:

| *irregular plural* | | | *singular* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| أخبار | *'akhbār* | | خبر | *khabar* | news item |
| أنباء | *'anbā'* | | نبأ | *naba'* | news item |
| أسعار | *'as9ār* | | سعر | *si9r* price | |
| أخطار | *'akhṭār* | | خطر | *khaṭar* danger | |
| أشياء | *'ashyā'* | | شيء | *shay'* thing | |
| أفلام | *'aflām* | | فلم | *film* film | |

(a) model *'akhbār*:

**Open** *S46.wav.* **Read, listen and repeat** group (a).

.....

(b) model *buyūt*:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| بيوت | *buyūt* | | بيت | *bayt* house | |
| خطوط | *khuṭūṭ* | | خطّ | *khaṭṭ* line | |
| بنوك | *bunūk* | | بنك | *bank* bank | |
| هنود | *hunūd* | | هندي | *hindī* Indian | |

**Open** *S47.wav.* **Read, listen and repeat** group (b).

.....

(c) model *madāris*:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| مدارس | *madāris* | مدرسة | *madrasa* school |
| مشاكل | *mashākil* | مشكلة | *mushkila* problem |
| مكاتب | *makātib* | مكتب | *maktab* office |
| مخارج | *makhārij* | مخرج | *makhraj* exit |
| مداخل | *madākhil* | مدخل | *madkhal* entrance |

**Open *S48.wav*. Read, listen and repeat** group (c).

(d) model *'asābī9*:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| أسابيع | *'asābī9* | أسبوع | *'usbū9* week |
| مفاتيح | *mafātīḥ* | مفتاح | *miftāḥ* key |

**Open *S49.wav*. Read, listen and repeat** group (d).

(e) model *mudarā'*:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| مدراء | *mudarā'* | مدير | *mudīr* director, manager |
| وزراء | *wuzarā'* | وزير | *wazīr* minister |

**Open *S50.wav*. Read, listen and repeat** group (e).

(f) model *9arab*, in which a few relatives form their plural simply by dropping the ending ي... :

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| عرب | *9arab* | عربي | *9arabī* Arab, Arabian, Arabic |
| إنجليز | *'ingilīz* | إنجليزي | *'ingilīzī* English, British |
| يهود | *yahūd* | يهودي | *yahūdī* Jew(ish) |

**Open *S51.wav*. Read, listen and repeat** group (f).

These are a few of the most important patterns. There are many more.

Some words have alternative plurals, one with an ending, one irregular, or even two irregular forms. Sometimes alternative forms have different meanings. An example is تقرير *taqrīr* 'report, decision', plurals تقارير *taqārīr* 'reports', تقريرات *taqrīrāt* 'decisions'.

Another important word with alternative plurals is أميركي *'amayrikī* 'American', plurals أميركيين\...يون *'amayrikīyīn/-īyūn* or أميركان *'amayrikān* (NB: don't mistake this last plural for the dual form, which would be أميركيان *'amayrik**īy**ān*, since the dual is regular throughout).

Three final things to note about dual and plural forms:

- All the duals and plurals can be made definite with the article, as usual: المديرين, الشركات, المعلّمين, المدراء.
- When a noun has a regular plural, we add the masculine ending (ون...\ين...) to a noun denoting a male person, or to show mixed company, male and female; we add the feminine regular ending (ات...) to a noun denoting a female person, *and* to a noun denoting anything other than a person.
- The *-ayn* dual ending and the *-īn* regular plural ending are both written ين... . There can be confusion. There is a means of marking the difference, but you hardly ever see it in use. In general, read *-īn* if in doubt, since the plural is commoner than the dual. NB: The confusion arises only with *regular* plurals; the form مديرين , for example, must be *mudīrayn* (dual), since the corresponding plural is مدراء *mudarā'* (irregular).

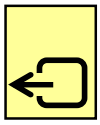
In the rest of this book (lessons and vocabularies), irregular plurals of new words will be given with the singular, so: بيت بيوت *bayt buyūt*. Where no plural is marked, it is regular, i.e. formed with an ending, as shown above. You will sometimes have difficulty with irregular plurals. So do many Arabs. The commoner patterns, and the words to which they apply, become more familiar with practice. Always learn a new word with its irregular plural if it has one.

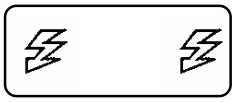
**Exercise 1** Here are some plurals. Give the singular form of the word:
(a) مدراء (b) سيّارات (c) تلفونات (d) مفتّشين (e) خطوط

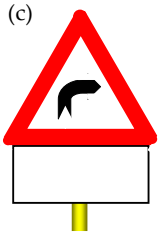
**Exercise 2** Put the words together in singular/plural pairs:
بنايات، مدير، مفتّش، بناية، وزراء، وزارات، شركات، بيوت، مدراء، مفتّشين، وزير، معلّمة، وزارة، شركة، معلّمات، بيت.

**Exercise 3** Make the feminine indefinite singular relative form:
(a) أميركا* (b) وطن (c) الباكستان* (d) إسرائيل (e) العراق
* New place names. Easy, if you read them aloud.

**Exercise 4** (a), (b) and (c) below are signs and notices we have read before. Fill in the missing captions, and then read, pronounce and translate the new sign (d) – see 6/1:

(a) 

(b) 

(c) 

(d) 


**Exercise 5** Look back at 6/Ex. 2. Read these new words, following the model:
(a) كتّاب *kuttāb* writers. Read زوّار visitors, عمّال workmen, نوّاب deputies.
(b) مكتوب *maktūb* written. Read ممنوع prohibited, مطبوع printed, معروف known, مكتوم confidential.
(c) مدرسة *madrasa* school. Read مكتبة library/bookshop, محكمة law-court.
(d) سياحة *siyāḥa* tourism. Read نجارة carpentry, سباكة plumbing, خياطة sewing.
The answers to these exercises follow paragraph 4 below.

**Numerals**

**4** Numerals are as follows. Most important: they are written and read from left to right → , like European numerals. **Write** the handwritten forms shown below the printed forms:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | ٢ ٢ ٢ | 1 | ١ ١ ١ |
| | ٢ ٢ ٢ | | ١ ١ ١ |
| 4 | ٤ ٤ ٤ | 3 | ٣ ٣ ٣ |
| | ٤ ٤ ٤ | | ٣ ٣ ٣ |
| 6 | ٦ ٦ ٦ | 5* | ٥ ٥ ٥ |
| | ٦ ٦ ٦ | | ٥ ٥ ٥ |
| 8 | ٨ ٨ ٨ | 7 | ٧ ٧ ٧ |
| | ٨ ٨ ٨ | | ٧ ٧ ٧ |
| 0 | ٠ ٠ ٠ | 9 | ٩ ٩ ٩ |
| | ٠ ٠ ٠ | | ٩ ٩ ٩ |

* See the comment in 6/5 (after the full alphabet) about letter forms ه , ٥ and the numeral ٥ 5.

Be careful with handwritten numerals ٢ (٢) and ٢ or ٣ (٣). Many people write ٣ as ٣ for extra clarity. It is not wrong to copy the printed forms in handwriting if you prefer, though some Arabs may read your ٢ as a handwritten ٣. Further, don't confuse ٥ (5) with ٠ (0).

When numerals occur with letters or symbols, they should be read like this: ٥٩٨ب as 598 B; ٦٣٪ as 63%. Reading in both directions takes a little practice.

European numerals are used in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. They are also increasingly used elsewhere in the Arab world, especially in the press.

There is more about the numbers, including their form as words, in Lesson 13.

**Exercise 6** Write in Arabic numerals:

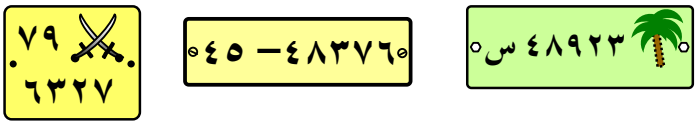
(a) 2487 (b) 503 (c) 1999 (d) 1420 (e) 2006

**Exercise 7** Write in European numerals:

(a) ٤٣٨٥ (b) ١٦٢ (c) ٢٠٥٧ (d) ١٠٠٠ (e) ٤٠٥

**Exercise 8** Copy, in Arabic numerals and letters, the numbers and letters of these car registration plates. Then put them into European numerals and letters:

(a) (b) (c)




The answers to these exercises follow immediately below.

**Answers to exercises**

**1** (a) مدير (b) سيّارة (c) تلفون (d) مفتّش (e) خطّ

**2** بناية بنايات؛ مدير مدراء؛ مفتّش مفتّشين؛ وزير وزراء؛ وزارة وزارات؛ شركة شركات؛ بيت بيوت؛ معلّمة معلّمات.

**3** (a) أميركية (b) وطنية (c) باكستانية (d) أسرائيلية (e) عراقية

**4** (a) مخرج *makhraj* (b) خطر *khaṭar* (d) تمهّل *tamahhal* (e) *qif* STOP

**5** (a) *zuwwār, 9ummāl, nuwwāb.* (b) *mamnū9, maṭbū9, ma9rūf, maktūm.*
(c) *maktaba, maḥkama.* (d) *nijāra, sibāka, khiyāṭa.*

**6** (a) ٢٤٨٧ (b) ٥٠٣ (c) ١٩٩٩ (d) ١٤٢٠ (e) ٢٠٠٦

**7** (a) 4385 (b) 162 (c) 2057 (d) 1000 (e) 405

**8** (a) ٧٩ ٦٣٢٧ 79 6327 (b) ٤٨٣٧٦–٤٥ 48376–45 (c) س ٤٨٩٢٣ 48923 S

**Tests**

**1** Read aloud and translate:

(a) العراق (b) القاهرة (c) شركة (d) ممكن (e) زيارة (f) إداري (g) ممثّلين
(h) السريين (j) محكمة (k) أجنبي (m) مدارس (n) الانتخابات

**2** Arrange these irregular plurals into groups, each group with its model (shown in the box).

Don't worry about unknown words; it is the pattern which counts:

مشاكل، خطوط، ظروف، مطاعم، أرقام، عواصم، أموال، وزراء، مبالغ، محاكم، أساليب، وكلاء، أفكار، بنوك.

أسابيع، آخبار، بيوت، مدارس، مدراء

**3** Make the indefinite masculine plural relative from these words:

(a) سوريا (b) إيران (c) مصر (d) العراق (e) *الكويت

* (e) New proper name. But it is familiar and you can handle it. Just follow the rules.

**4** Make these words plural. They all follow the feminine regular pattern:

(a) البناية (b) السفارة (c) مستشفى (d) كمبيوتر (e) أوتيل (f) معلّمة (g) المطار
(h) منظّمة (j) شركة (k) إمكانية (m) الزيارة (n) انتخاب

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