The Arabic map

How Arabic works, on one page

1 Read from the right

Every line starts on the right. Books open with the spine on the right.

2 28 letters, fewer than 20 shapes

a box = one shape. The dots decide.

ز zaay z	ر raa rolled r	ذ dhaal th: this	د daal d	خ khaa kh: loch	ح Haa breathy h
ج jiim j	ث thaa th: think	ت taa t	ب baa b	ا alif long aa	ق qaaf deep k
ف faa f	غ ghayn gargled r	ع ayn from the throat	ظ Zaa heavy th	ط Taa heavy t	ض Daad heavy d
ص Saad heavy s	ش shiin sh	س siin s	ي yaa y · long ii	و waaw w · long uu	ه haa h
ن nuun n	م miim m	ل laam l	ك kaaf k		

A capital letter in a name (Haa, Saad, Daad, Taa, Zaa) marks a heavy, deep sound.

3 Letters hold hands

و ز ر ذ د ا

These six never join to the letter on their left, so the next letter starts fresh.

alone	start	middle	end
ب	بـ	ـبـ	ـب

one letter, four shapes · the dots never move

4 Short vowels are small marks

fatha	kasra	damma	sukun	fatha + alif
بَ	بِ	بُ	بْ	بَا
a · ba	i · bi	u · bu	no vowel · b	long aa · baa

Everyday Arabic usually leaves these marks out. On this channel we always write them.

5 Words grow from roots

root ك ت ب = *writing*

كَتَبَ	كِتَاب	كَاتِب	مَكْتَب	مَكْتَبَة
kataba	kitaab	kaatib	maktab	maktaba
he wrote	*a book*	*a writer*	*a desk*	*a library*

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