

Arabic



“Until recently, relatively few Westerners ventured to learn Arabic but with the growing importance of the Middle East in international affairs and as a major tourist destination, that is changing. Studying Arabic can open many doors to people wanting careers in the Middle East and other Islamic countries. But learning our language in preparation for a holiday in an Arabic speaking country will help you immerse yourself in a truly fascinating civilisation, enhancing your cultural experience.

Arabic is the official language of over 20 countries with more than 375 million native speakers. These are largely concentrated in the Middle East, but there are minority groups of native speakers throughout the world. It is also an official language of the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the African Union. In addition to native speakers, many more millions know Arabic as a foreign language since, as the language of the Qu'ran, it is understood by Muslims throughout the world.

Learn Arabic at The University of Birmingham and open the doors to a diverse world steeped in culture and embracing the future”

Dr. Anissa Daoudi (</staff/profiles/cml/daoudi-anissa.aspx>), PhD in Applied Linguistics/Psycholinguistics
Language Co-ordinator for Arabic

Is Arabic difficult?

Arabic is entirely surrounded by myths. You must clear your mind of these before starting to learn the language. Here are just a few of those myths.

“The script is impossibly difficult, like hieroglyphics.”

Not true. It has an alphabet of 28 letters. Letters are joined up. There are actually only 5 basic shapes. Writing goes from right to left, which for many people is easier than writing left to right as it involves pushing the pen, not pulling it.

“Arabic has too many exotic sounds, impossible to learn for foreigners.”

Not true. There are only two or three sounds which are not found in English and these can be learned easily through imitation.

“Arabic has an enormous vocabulary: 400 words for a camel, 200 for a lion, etc.”

Not true. Ancient poetry has a very complex and varied vocabulary. But the vocabulary of Modern Standard Arabic is no more complex than the vocabulary of any other modern language.

“Arabic grammar is impossibly complicated.”

Not true. Its verb system is quite easy. For example, there are just two tenses - past and non-past.

You can take one of our Arabic courses or, if you are a student here, study Arabic as an MOMD:

- **Summer courses** (</facilities/cml/summer/index.aspx>) - a great way of trying out a new language from scratch or coming back to a language you have studied previously. There are no assessments and no books to buy, just lots of language practice in small groups.
- **Open Access** (</facilities/cml/iwlp/open/index.aspx>) - available for all who wish to study a language; students, staff, and members of the public.
- **Modules Outside the Main Discipline (MOMD)** (</facilities/cml/iwlp/momd/index.aspx>) - reserved for undergraduates who wish to take a language course as part of their degree
- **Free course** (</facilities/cml/iwlp/free/index.aspx>) - for all full time undergraduate students who are not taking a language as a MOMD