THE STRIVING

MUSLIM ACADEMY

Islamic and Academic Education

ISLAMIC EDUCATION · FREE TO PRINT

Arabic Letters and Tracing

Every letter in all four forms, with tracing and joining practice. For children, and for adults starting from the very beginning.

WHAT IS INSIDE

- Teacher's notes: the seven mistakes, and what to do
- The twenty eight letters, by shape family
- Tracing sheets, one family at a time
- The confusable letters, drilled separately
- Letters on the line, and letters below it
- All four forms of every letter, then joining practice
- A five minute check

The Striving Muslim Academy

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Before you teach the first letter

Most children who struggle with Arabic reading are not slow. They were taught the letters in an order that guaranteed confusion, and nobody noticed for two years. These are the seven problems we see most, and what we do about each one.



1. Alphabetical order is the wrong order

A child meets ب on Monday and ت on Tuesday and ث on Wednesday. Three letters with the same body and different dots, three days running. They will mix them up for years.

Teach by shape family. Learn one body thoroughly, then add the dots to it. The families are on page 3. A child who knows the body can never produce a letter that does not exist, which halves the possible errors straight away.

2. The letter name is not the letter sound

A child who has learned *alif, baa, taa* often cannot read بَ, because they are hunting for the word "baa" and the page is asking for the sound "ba". This is the single commonest reason a child can recite the alphabet beautifully and still not read.

Teach the sound first and the name later. Point and say "b", not "baa". Names are for talking about letters. Sounds are for reading them.

3. Dots are treated as decoration

To an adult the dots are obviously part of the letter. To a five-year-old they look like specks. They copy the body carefully and put the dots anywhere.

Say the dots out loud, every single time, for the first six weeks. "Baa: one dot, underneath." "Thaa: three dots, on top." Make the child say it too. It feels tedious. It saves a year.

4. The hand is going the wrong way

Everything else the child writes goes left to right. The hand has a habit, and the habit fights them. Right-handed children also cover the letter they have just written and cannot check it.

Tilt the paper, clockwise for a right hander. Start every stroke with your finger on the starting point before the pencil touches. For a left handed child, tilt the other way and let them write above the line rather than on it.

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Before you teach the first letter, continued

The last three, and a note for a parent teaching at home without Arabic of their own.



5. Mirror writing, especially the hooks

The hooked letters, ن ل ي س, get flipped. The child is not careless. They have not yet fixed which way the bowl opens.

Give the shape a name and a story. The bowl that catches rain. The tooth that bites. Children remember a picture long after they have forgotten an instruction. Trace with a finger in the air, large, before the pencil ever comes out.

6. Five minutes daily beats forty minutes weekly

Letter shapes live in muscle memory, not understanding. Muscle memory is built by frequency, not by length. A child who practises every day for five minutes will overtake one who does an hour on Saturday, every time.

One tracing row a day, and stop. Stop while they still want more. A child who is bored of Arabic at six is a problem you will be solving at sixteen.

7. Correcting everything at once

You hand back a sheet with six corrections. The child sees only that they failed. Nothing improves, and they start to dread the lesson.

Choose one error and ignore the rest. Name what they did well first, and be specific, so they know it is true. Next week, choose the next error. This is slower on paper and far faster in practice.

For a parent using this at home

You do not need to know Arabic to use these sheets. You need to be able to see whether the shape matches the model and whether the dots are in the right place. That is all. If you can do that, you can run this practice.

Do not try to correct pronunciation you are unsure of. Leave that to the class, and say so honestly to your child. Guessing at makhraj and teaching it wrong is harder to undo than teaching nothing.

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The twenty eight letters, by family

Teach down this page, not across the alphabet. Each box is one body. Learn the body, then add the dots. Nine families cover every letter there is.



FAMILY	LETTERS	NAMES	WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU TEACH IT
The boat	ب ت ث	baa, taa, thaa	One dot under, two on top, three on top.
The bowl	ج ح خ	jeem, haa, khaa	Dot inside, no dot, dot on top.
The hook	د ذ	daal, dhaal	No dot, one dot on top. Neither joins forward.
The curl	ر ز	raa, zaay	No dot, one dot on top. Neither joins forward.
The teeth	س ش	seen, sheen	Three teeth. Bare, then three dots on top.
The loop	ص ض	saad, daad	A loop and a tail. Bare, then one dot on top.
The standing loop	ط ظ	taa, zaa	A loop with a mast. Bare, then one dot on top.
The ear	ع غ	'ayn, ghayn	Bare, then one dot on top. Watch the four shapes of this one.
The eye	ف ق	faa, qaaf	One dot on top, then two. The tails differ: flat, then deep.

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Why to teach by family and not by alphabet

Baa, taa and thaa are one shape with the dots moved. Taught together, a child learns one body and three dot patterns, which is one thing to remember instead of three. Taught in alphabet order they arrive weeks apart and they confuse them for a year.

Finish a whole family before you start the next, and always teach the bare body first, with no dots at all. The dots are a second lesson.

The ten letters that belong to no family

These ten share their shape with nothing else, so each one is learned on its own. Teach them after the nine families, not before.



LETTER	NAME	NOTE FOR THE TEACHER
ا	alif	A straight stroke, top to bottom. Does not join forward.
ك	kaaf	Changes shape a great deal when joined. Teach it late.
ل	laam	Tall, with a bowl at the foot. Often mirrored.
م	meem	A small head and a tail that drops below the line.
ن	noon	A deep bowl, one dot on top. Confused with baa constantly.
ه	haa	Four quite different shapes. The hardest letter to write.
و	waaw	A head and a tail. Does not join forward.
ي	yaa	Two dots underneath. Confused with baa and with noon.

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Six letters never join to the letter in front of them

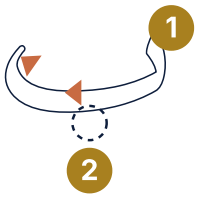
ا د ذ ر ز و

Children find this baffling until somebody says it plainly. These six hold hands with the letter behind them and refuse the letter in front. Teach this as a rule with a name, and drill it, or the child will wonder for years why some words have gaps in the middle.

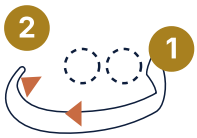
Tracing: the boat and the bowl

The gold number is where the pencil starts. The arrows sit on the letter and show where the hand turns. The dashed circles are the dots, and they go on last. Everything begins at the right.

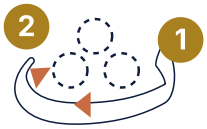




BAA



TAA



THAA

baa · one dot underneath ب

taa · two dots on top ت

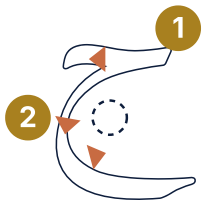
thaa · three dots on top ث

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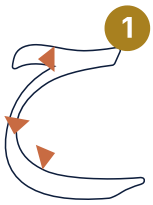
Tracing: the bowl

These three share one body and differ only by the dot. Trace the body until it is the same every time, then add the dot.

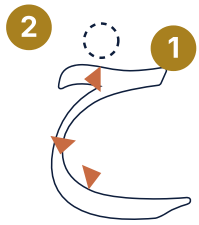




JEEM



HAA



KHAA

jeem · one dot inside ج

haa · no dot, one stroke ح

khaa · one dot on top خ

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Tracing: three that do not join forward

These join to the letter behind them and never to the letter in front. Say that out loud each time they trace one, until they say it back to you without being asked.

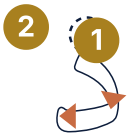




ALIF



DAAL



DHAAL

alif · top to bottom, one stroke ا

daal · no dot, one stroke د

dhaal · one dot on top ذ

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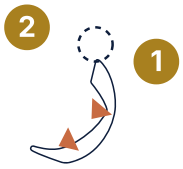
Tracing: the last three that do not join forward

Three more that do not join forward. Raa and zaay drop below the line, which is the part children forget first.





RAA



ZAAY



WAAW

raa · drops below the line ر

zaay · one dot on top ز

waaw · a head, then a tail و

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The letters children actually confuse

Do not drill these as pairs when you first teach them, or you will plant the confusion yourself. Use this page later, as a check, once each letter is known separately.



Same body, different dots

PAIR	THE ONLY DIFFERENCE	ASK THE CHILD
ب ن	Shallow boat with the dot under, deep bowl with the dot on top	"Is the dot above or below? Is the bowl deep or shallow?"
ت ث	Two dots, three dots	"Count them out loud before you write."
ج ح خ	Dot inside, no dot, dot on top	"Inside, nowhere, or on top?"
د ذ	No dot, one dot	"Does it have its hat on?"
ر ز	No dot, one dot	"Does it have its hat on?"
س ش	Bare teeth, three dots	"Teeth with dots, or without?"
ص ض	No dot, one dot	"Does it have its hat on?"
ط ظ	No dot, one dot	"Does it have its hat on?"
ع غ	No dot, one dot	"Does it have its hat on?"
ف ق	One dot and a flat tail, two dots and a deep tail	"Look at the tail, not only the dots."

Practice: write the letter you hear

Say one letter from a pair. The child writes it. Six boxes, six letters. Then swap and let the child say them to you.

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Letters that rest on the line, and letters that hang through it

Eleven letters sit on top of the writing line. The other seventeen put part of themselves underneath it. A child who writes all twenty eight on top of the line has not written any single letter wrongly, and still cannot be read.



They rest on the line — eleven letters

ا ب ت ث د ذ ط ظ ف ك ه

ON THE LINE

They hang through the line — seventeen letters

ج ح خ ر ز س ش ص ض

BELOW THE LINE

ع غ ق ل م ن و ي

BELOW THE LINE

The drop belongs to the letter standing alone or ending a word

Put one of these in the middle of a word and most of them flatten onto the line, because the joined middle form is a different shape. Compare the seen in مَسْجِد, which sits on the line, with the seen ending دَرْس, which drops. The same holds for the jeem in سَجَدَ against خَرَجَ, and the noon in بِنْت against مِن.

Three of them never flatten. Raa, zaay and waaw have no joined middle form at all, because they are among the six that refuse the letter in front of them, so they drop every single time they appear. That is worth saying out loud the day you teach the six.

This sheet is set in naskh, which is the hand the mushaf is printed in. In ruq'ah and in some teaching hands a few of these depths differ. Teach the hand your student will actually read.

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Four pairs worth drilling

Four pairs children genuinely confuse, where the depth is half the answer. Write each pair along the solid line. The first must never touch the dashed line, the second must always reach it.



ب and ن

baa rests, noon dips

ب ن

ف and ق

faa rests, qaaf dips

ف ق

د and ر

daal rests, raa dips

د ر

ك and ل

kaaf rests, laam dips

ك ل

Watch for this

Baa against noon is the complaint every teacher of this alphabet has. The usual fix is the dot, one underneath against one on top, and on its own it is not enough, because a child writing quickly puts the dot where the hand lands. Depth is the other half: baa keeps its bowl on the line, noon drives it below. Taught both tests, a child has two chances instead of one.

When a word comes back wrong, do not say the dot is misplaced. Ask which of the two reaches the lower line, and make them answer from the shape.

Every letter in all four forms

Read each row from the right. Alone, at the end of a word, in the middle, at the beginning. Pin this page up. It answers nine out of ten questions a child will ask you.



NAME	SOUND	ALONE	END	MIDDLE	START
alif	a	ا	ـا	ـا	ا
baa	b	ب	ـب	ـبـ	بـ
taa	t	ت	ـت	ـتـ	تـ
thaa	th	ث	ـث	ـثـ	ثـ
jeem	j	ج	ـج	ـجـ	جـ
haa	h	ح	ـح	ـحـ	حـ
khaa	kh	خ	ـخ	ـخـ	خـ
daal	d	د	ـد	ـد	د
dhaal	dh	ذ	ـذ	ـذ	ذ
raa	r	ر	ـر	ـر	ر
zaay	z	ز	ـز	ـز	ز
seen	s	س	ـس	ـسـ	سـ
sheen	sh	ش	ـش	ـشـ	شـ
saad	s	ص	ـص	ـصـ	صـ

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Every letter in all four forms

Continued. The last four letters, ك ه و ي, change the most. Expect them to take the longest and do not rush them.



NAME	SOUND	ALONE	END	MIDDLE	START
daad	d	ض	ـض	ـضـ	ضـ
taa	t	ط	ـط	ـطـ	طـ
zaa	z	ظ	ـظ	ـظـ	ظـ
'ayn	'a	ع	ـع	ـعـ	عـ
ghayn	gh	غ	ـغ	ـغـ	غـ
faa	f	ف	ـف	ـفـ	فـ
qaaf	q	ق	ـق	ـقـ	قـ
kaaf	k	ك	ـك	ـكـ	كـ
laam	l	ل	ـل	ـلـ	لـ
meem	m	م	ـم	ـمـ	مـ
noon	n	ن	ـن	ـنـ	نـ
haa	h	ه	ـه	ـهـ	هـ
waaw	w	و	ـو	ـو	و
yaa	y	ي	ـي	ـيـ	يـ

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A word on the sound column

The English letters above are a crutch to get a beginner started, nothing more. Several pairs look identical in English and are completely different in Arabic: س and ش, ص and ز, ذ, ط and ظ.

These must be heard from a teacher, not read from a chart. Say so to the child openly, so they do not settle into a wrong sound believing it is right.

Joining letters together

Read the joined word on the right. Then write the separate letters beside it, and say each sound as you write. This is the bridge between knowing letters and reading words.



JOINED	LETTERS IN IT	YOUR TURN
بَتَ	ب + ت	
جَبَ	ج + ب	
سَمَ	س + م	
كَتَبَ	ك + ت + ب	
نَصَرَ	ن + ص + ر	
ذَهَبَ	ذ + ه + ب	
فَتَحَ	ف + ت + ح	
خَرَجَ	خ + ر + ج	

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Watch for this

When a child reaches a word containing one of the six non joiners, they will often stop dead, certain they have made a mistake, because the word appears to have a hole in it. Look at نَصَرَ. The ر ends it, so nothing follows.

Tell them before they meet it, not after they have panicked: "Some letters do not hold hands forwards. The gap is meant to be there."

A five minute check

Use this once a month, not once a week. It is to tell you where to teach next, not to give the child a mark. Do not show them a score.



1. Name the letter

Point to each. The child says the sound. Tick what they got.

ث	ح	ذ	ش	ض	ظ	غ	ق
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Write the letter you hear

3. Which letters are in this word?

مَسْجِد	
قَلَم	
بَيْت	

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What the result tells you

- **Dots wrong, shapes right.** They know the letters. Go back to saying the dots aloud for two weeks. This is quick to fix.
- **Shapes wrong.** Go back to tracing that shape family only. Do not move on.
- **Knows them alone, lost in a word.** Normal, and it means they are ready for joining practice, not that they have forgotten the letters.
- **Slow but correct.** Leave it alone. Speed comes with mileage and nothing else.

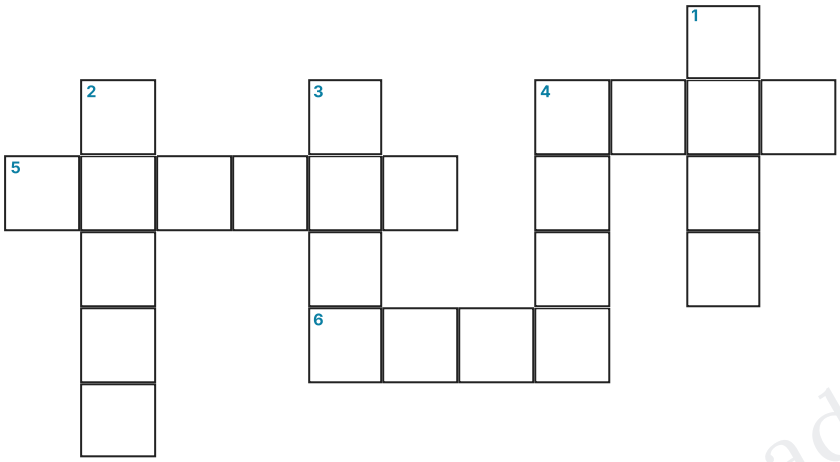
One last thing

A child who is still mixing up two letters after six months has not failed, and neither have you. They need more time on those two letters and less on everything else. Narrow the work. Do not widen it.

Word Whizz

Crossword

Everything you need is on the pages of this pack. Read each clue and write the word in the boxes, one letter in each box. The number in brackets tells you how many letters the word has.



Across

4 Which letter has a deep bowl and one dot on top, and is confused with baa all the time? (4)

5 Letters that share one body are taught together as a shape what? (6)

6 Practising every day for how many minutes beats an hour on Saturday? (4)

Down

1 Baa, taa and thaa belong to the family named after this floating thing. (4)

2 The sheet is set in this hand, the one the mushaf is printed in. (5)

3 Which letter is a straight stroke from top to bottom? (4)

4 How many shape families cover every letter? (4)

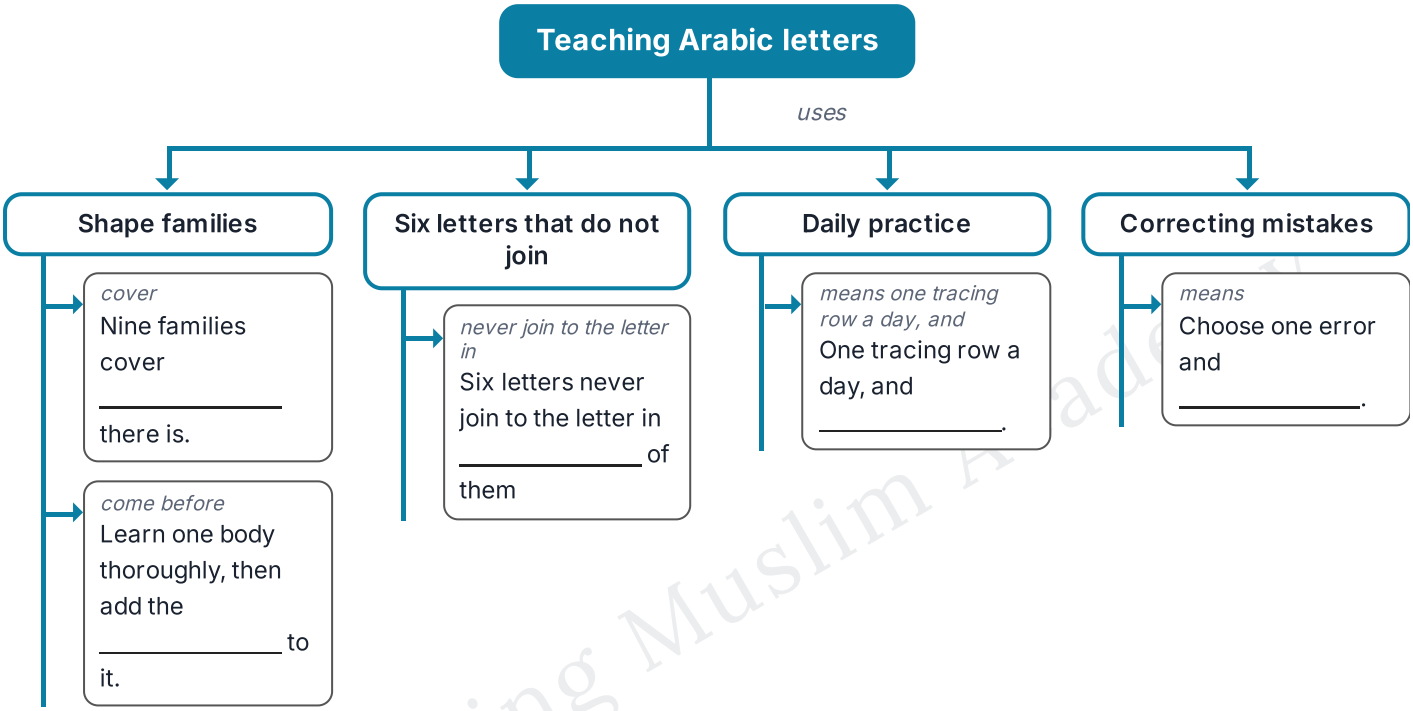
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Let's Map It!

Fill in the blanks on the map with the words in the box. Read along the arrows.

USE THESE WORDS

dots **stop** **ignore the rest** **front** **every letter**



Word search

Find each word in the grid. Words read across, down, or slanting down. Tick each one when you find it.

B	T	T	P	U	T	H	T	A
O	F	U	N	O	P	Y	J	P
D	O	L	E	T	T	E	R	S
Y	H	O	O	K	M	U	V	W
T	E	E	T	H	V	J	J	S
T	R	A	C	I	N	G	V	K
F	S	O	L	O	O	P	E	J
U	S	M	C	U	R	L	E	T
T	M	I	R	R	O	R	D	S

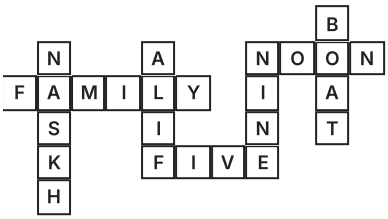
- ☐ Letters
- ☐ Tracing
- ☐ Mirror
- ☐ Teeth
- ☐ Hook
- ☐ Curl
- ☐ Loop
- ☐ Body

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Answers

For the grown-up: cover this page while the puzzles are being done.

Crossword



Across: 4 Noon, 5 Family, 6 Five

Down: 1 Boat, 2 Naskh, 3 Alif, 4 Nine

Let's Map It

every letter; dots; front; stop; ignore the rest

Word search

B	T	T	P	U	T	H	T	A
O	F	U	N	O	P	Y	J	P
D	O	L	E	T	T	E	R	S
Y	H	O	O	K	M	U	V	W
T	E	E	T	H	V	J	J	S
T	R	A	C	I	N	G	V	K
F	S	O	L	O	O	P	E	J
U	S	M	C	U	R	L	E	T
T	M	I	R	R	O	R	D	S

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