



ARABIC PHONEMIC INVENTORY

Please remember that dialectal differences exist for each language and should be considered when using the phonemic charts.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	b			t d t̪ d̪			k	q		ʔ
Nasal	m			n						
Trill				r						
Tap or Flap				ɾ						
Fricative		f	θ ð θ̤ ð̤	s z s̪ z̪		ʃ		χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h
Affricate					dʒ					
Glides (Approximant)	w					j				
Liquid (Lateral Approximant)				l						

/t̪/, /d̪/, /s̪/, and /ʒ̪/ reflect emphatic consonants. According to IPA guidelines, these emphatic consonants may be transcribed as /tˤ/, /dˤ/, /sˤ/, /ʒˤ/.

Reference:

- Amayreh, M. (2003). Completion of the Consonant Inventory of Arabic. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 46, 517–529.
- Amayreh, M., & Dyson, A. (1998). The acquisition of Arabic consonants. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 41, 642–653.
- Saleem, A., & Dyson, A. (2003, November). *Arabic Preschool Phonological Screening Test—Revised (APPST–R)*. Poster session presented at 2003 Annual Convention of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Chicago.



Facts on Arabic Phonology*

- There are three “levels” of Arabic:¹
 - Modern Standard Arabic—used in religious ceremony and literature,
 - Educated Spoken Arabic—used in schools and public arenas, and
 - Colloquial Arabic—used at home and in community; significant dialectal variability exists among colloquial forms.
- Dialectal variations in phonology are evident in Arabic. It is important to recognize this when assessing an Arabic speaker.
- Arabic has emphatic consonants, such as /t̤/, /d̤/, /ð̤/, and /s̤/. Emphatic consonants are described as those sounds that are produced with the root of the tongue retracted toward the pharyngeal wall.²
- In postvocalic environments the /r/ is trilled; however, in prevocalic environments the /r/ is tapped.³
- Phonemes in Arabic that are not found in English include the following:
 - /t̤/, /d̤/, /ð̤/, /s̤/, /χ/, /ʁ/, /ħ/, /ʕ/, and /ʔ/.⁴
- Phonemes in English that are not found in Arabic include the following:
 - /p/, /v/, /ɹ/, /z/, /g/, and /ŋ/.
- Research indicates that for Arabic-speaking children in Jordan, medial consonants have a higher incidence of accuracy than initial or final consonants.⁵

*Information based on a dialect of Arabic used in Jordan.

¹ Amayreh, M. (2003). Completion of the Consonant Inventory of Arabic. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 46*, 517–529.

² Amayreh, M., & Dyson, A. (1998). The acquisition of Arabic Consonants. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 41*, 642–653.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*