

## AMERICAN TO AJAMI TRANSCRIPTION GUIDE

Galen Currah, 14 September 2012

Other languages transcribed into Arabic characters are called Ajami (“ignorant”).

Some countries have an official Ajami alphabet.

The general rules of Arabic orthography apply to Ajami.

1. Transcribe consonants from right to left.
2. There is no distinction between upper and lower cases.
3. Consonants are written on an invisible grid of four invisible lines. Most stay between levels two and three; some ascend to level one, and some others descend to level four.  
Thus: ا ب ت د ف گ ه ج ک ل م ن پ ق ر س ت و ی ز
4. Every consonant has four forms: initial, median, final and isolate. A consonant in any position of a word may take any one of the four forms, depending on whether it is connected to a preceding or a following consonant. E.g., b = ب ب ب ب.
5. Some final and isolate forms take a flourish: E.g., b = ب ب, n = ن ن, j = ج ج, s = س س, y = ی ی.
6. Most consonants connect to a following consonant. There are four consonants that never connect to a following consonant: alif (ا), d (د), r (ر) and w (و). These four connect with a preceding consonant but not with a following one.
7. Transcribe vowels a (ا), o (و) and u (و) above a preceding consonant; i (ي) and e (ي) below a preceding consonant.
8. Very short vowels can be left unwritten, unless they are required for clarity.
9. A consonant that is not followed by a vowel takes a sukuun (◌ْ) over it. Sukuuns may be left unwritten unless needed for clarity.
10. A consonant that has neither a vowel nor a sukuun serves to lengthen a preceding vowel. E.g., moon = مُوْن, mean = مِیْن, maan = مَان, laam = لَام.
11. L + aa represents a special case; instead of لَآ one writes لَّا.
12. One may transcribe a vowel-less consonant instead of a vowel: l for a, y for e or i, and w for o or u. E.g., Galen may be written گَلِنْ or گالن.
13. Double or geminated consonants are written as a single character with a chadda (◌ّ) over it, as does a vowel-less final consonant that is released or aspirate. E.g., babble = بَبَل, shell = شِلّ, lip<sup>h</sup> = لِبّ.

Write your name in Ajami. Look up the consonants in the table on the next pages. Start on the right and write leftwards. Write the consonants first. Remember to connect the consonants, except following alif, d, r and w. Then, add in the vowels. Optionally, leave out weak vowels, or use one or two vowel-less consonants in place of strong vowels.

American: \_\_\_\_\_

Ajami: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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American	Ajami	American	Ajami
Glottal stop	ا ا ا ا	apple	آپل
a	اَ	bad	بَدْ
aa	اَا		باد
e	اِ	bed	بَدْ
ee	اِی		بید
é	اِ	bid	بَدْ
ée	اِی		بید
i	اِ	bead	بَدْ
ii	اِی		بید
o	اُ	baud	بَدْ
oo	اُو		بود
ó	اُ	bode	بَدْ
óó	اُو		بود
u	اُ	booed	بَدْ
B b	ببب ب	Bible	بابل
C c	تتت ت	church	تُورِت
D d	ددد د	Dwaddle	دودَل
F f	ففف ف	forfeit	فُورفَت
G g	گگگ گ	google	گُوگل

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H	h	ح ح ح	hurdle	حُورْدَلْ
J	j	ج ج ج	Jordan	جُورْدَنْ
K	k	ك ك ك	kick	كِّكْ
L	l	ل ل ل	ladle	لَادَلْ
M	m	م م م	memory	مِمْرْ
N	n	ن ن ن	nany	نَانْ
P	p	پ پ پ	papa	پَاپْ
Q	q	ق ق ق	queen	قُوَيْنْ
R	r	ر ر ر	roar	رُورْ
S	s	س س س	sissy	سِيسِي
T	t	ت ت ت	tattle	تَتَلْ
W	w	و و و	way	وَيْ
X	x	ك س ك س ك س ك س	wax	وَكْسْ
Y	y	ي ي ي	Yes	يِسْ
Z	z	ز ز ز	zanny	زَانِيْ
Sukuun		◌ْ	mud	مَدْ
Chadda		◌ّ	muddy	مَدِّ