

# I Write Wolofal

## مَنْ نَا وُلْفَلْ

An Ajami primer  
to read and to write Wolof in Arabic letters

جَنْگُ آكُ بِنْدَ آرَابُ بُّ نُّ وُلْفَلْ



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(translated from Wolof)

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This document conforms to criteria established in 2002 by the  
Direction d'alphabétisation en langues nationales

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Language: English

Titre: I Write Wolofal

An Ajami primer to read and to write Wolof in Arabic letters

Genre: Literacy

A course to learn to read and to write Wolof in Arabic letters

Language code: 639-3 : wol

## **Avant Propos**

It was an honour for us to prepare this primer on Wolof written in Arabic characters, following guidelines prepared by the experts of the Arabic Group in the Direction d'alphabétisation des langues nationales, under the leadership of Mamadou Basse.

Since Wolof remains the main trade language of Senegal, we hope that this little work will prove useful to those who are learning, for the first time, these harmonised Arabic letters, in order to widen their common knowledge in this area of human development.

Presented in basic English, this primer will afford access for many of those who are learning Wolof, in very few hours of time, to their first steps in mastering the reading and writing of Wolofal. Such learners will be able to prepare written materials designed to improve the quality of life of many, by facilitating communication between diverse peoples.

SIL remains involved in linguistic analysis, translation and publication in some 70 countries and in more than a thousand languages, employing the alphabets that diverse ethnic communities both know and appreciate, whatever be their educational and social background.

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## Introduction

1. Wolof words written in Arabic characters are called ‘Wolofal’, that is, ‘wolofized’ Arabic. It is also called ‘Ajami’, which describes any non-Arabic language written in Arabic characters.

2. Wolofal is written from right to left :

*ñommàc* ← *roojyedn.*

Write your name here, from right to left :



3. The Wolof consonants are the following:

**b c d f g (h) j k l m n ñ ŋ p q r s t w x and y.**

The Wolof vowels are : **a à ë e é i o ó and u.**<sup>1</sup>

4. Certain vowels are written above their consonant and others below.

<sup>a</sup> | <sup>a°</sup> r f | <sup>u</sup> y | j g n | <sup>a u</sup> d ñ ñ | t m̂ | s ñ̂ | <sup>a</sup> | <sup>a°</sup> r f | <sup>u</sup> b | <sup>ó°</sup> g r  
 i é | i | i | e

5. Wolofal does not distinguish *upper* and *lower* case. This fact makes learning Wolofal easier than learning French!
6. Wolofal is a cursive script derived from Arabic. However, some letters are not joined with those that follow. We shall return to these, further on.
7. Each Wolofal consonant has four forms that depend on their position within a word: initial, median, final and isolate.  
b b \_ b \_ b ←
8. This primer suit the guidelines published by the Direction d’alphabétisation en langues nationales.
9. Those who complete this course will enjoy being able to read anything written in Wolofal.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolofal actually has neither consonants nor vowels. Rather it consists of letters and diacritical marks. The letters are written on a line in cursive, whilst the diacritical marks are positioned either above their letter or below. However, for purposes of this primer, we shall call the letters consonants and some of the diacritical marks shall we call vowels.



We write Wolof  
from right to left →

We write Wolofal  
← from left to right

ب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ t

ت \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b

پ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ p

ت \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ c

بٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ t b c

تٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b c p t

پٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ c p t b

تٲت \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ p t b c

بٲٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ t b c p

تٲٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b c p

پٲٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ c p t

تٲٲب \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ p t b

## Lesson 2

### Four more consonants that look alike (m, n, ñ, y)

These consonants look alike.

m	n	ñ	y
م	ن	ني	ي

Each consonant a four forms.

Isolate	Final	Median	Initial	letter
م	م	م	م	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	n
ني	ني	ني	ني	ñ
ي	ي	ي	ي	y

Notice that the form final of n, ñ and y descend below their line.

~~م م م ن ن ن ني ني ني ي ي ي~~

Write these consonants here:

\_\_\_\_\_

م ن ني ي ñ nm



Write the Wolof from left to right →	Write the Wolofal ← from right to left
م _____	_____ m n ñ
ن _____	_____ n ñ y
ي _____	_____ ñ y m
ي _____	_____ y m n
مين _____	_____ m n ñ y
ني _____	_____ n ñ y m
نيم _____	_____ ñ y m n
يمن _____	_____ y m n ñ
مني _____	_____ ñ p m t
نيم _____	_____ y c b ñ
نيمن _____	_____ b m c
يمنن _____	_____ t p y

### Lesson 3

#### The five most common vowels (a, e, i, o, u)

a	e	i	o	u
◌̄	◌̣	◌̇	◌̈	◌̉

In roman-based alphabets, all the consonants and vowels are written on their line, whilst in Arabic-based alphabets, only consonants are written on their line; and the vowels are written either above their consonant or below. The vowels **a o and u** are positioned above their consonant; **i and e** are positioned below.

Write in Wolof from left to right →	Write in Wolofal ← from right to left
يَ _____	_____ b a
نِ _____	_____ c i b i t i
يِ _____	_____ p i y e
بِ _____	_____ b i
مِ _____	_____ m u c o
نِ _____	_____ n a p u
نِ _____	_____ ñ e m a
يِ _____	_____ y i n e
بِ _____	_____ m o y i

## Lesson 4

### The shadda and the sukuun

Shadda	Sukuun
◌ّ	◌◌

In Wolofal, the geminate consonants, such as ‘tt’, consist of a consonant that carries a shadda (◌ّ) above it. Thus, the geminate ‘bb’ is written بّب. In the case of a consonant that is not followed by a vowel, we write un sukuun above it. Thus, a ‘l’ final is written ل◌ in Wolofal.<sup>2</sup> The shadda and the sukuun never appear together over a same consonant.

### Examples

مّ	m a n	نّ	n a t t u
مّ	m e ñ ñ	نّ	n a t t
مّ	m a t	نن	n e n
مّ	m a t t	نن	n a n
نّم	n a m m	نن	n e n n e

<sup>2</sup> When a consonant serves to lengthen a preceding vowel, it takes neither a vowel nor a sukuun. Thus, the Wolof word «boo» is written بو in Wolofal.

Write these words en Wolof

Write these words in Wolofal

ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ٲٲٲ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b a n  
 \_\_\_\_\_ m a t t m i  
 \_\_\_\_\_ n e c c o c c  
 \_\_\_\_\_ p i c c i  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ñ a m  
 \_\_\_\_\_ n a y  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ñ a n  
 \_\_\_\_\_ m a n  
 \_\_\_\_\_ n e p a t t  
 \_\_\_\_\_ n a t t u  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b e n n  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c a t  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c i n  
 \_\_\_\_\_ p e c c

## Lesson 5

### Four consonants that are not joined to a following consonant (alif, d, r, w)

alif	d	r	w
	ﺩ	ﺭ	ﻭ

The letters **alif** **d** **r** and **w** can be joined to a preceding consonant but not to a following one. The consonant alif does not exist in Wolof. In Wolofal, the alif carries a vowel, either above it or below it. (An alif without a vowel lengthens a preceding vowel, as we shall see in Lesson 8.)

Isolate	Final	Median	Initial	letter
	ﻝ	ﻝ		alif
ﺩ	ﺩ	ﺩ	ﺩ	d
ﺭ	ﺭ	ﺭ	ﺭ	r
ﻭ	ﻭ	ﻭ	ﻭ	w

See how some letters rise and others descend:



Write these consonants here:







## Write these words en Wolof

## Write these words in Wolofal

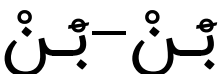
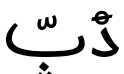




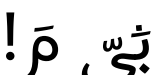


وَر	_____	_____	r a b w i
رُو	_____	_____	t u r w i
دَر	_____	_____	y a w m i
رَبْ	_____	_____	r a b a t
دَوْن	_____	_____	r a t
دَبْ	_____	_____	r a m m u
دَبْ نَبْ	_____	_____	r a t t
دِينْ	_____	_____	w a n
ثُرُو	_____	_____	w a r a d e m
أَيْنْ	_____	_____	W a y n a.
رَبِّيْ	_____	_____	ñ u w o n e
بِيْ وَ	_____	_____	w o t t u
دَيْ دُو	_____	_____	ñ e y w i
وَرَوْتُ	_____	_____	a n a m

## Lesson 6

### Four more vowels (à, ë, é, ó)

à	ë	é	ó
			

The vowels à ë and ó are positioned above their vowel whereas the vowel é is positioned below it.

Write these words en Wolof	Write these words in Wolofal
	_____ b ë t y i
	_____ d é y b i
	_____ d é w é n
	_____ Ñ ë w n a.
	_____ y ó b b u
	_____ y ó n n i
	_____ r à ñ ñ i
	_____ r à p p
	_____ d ë p p

## Lesson 7

### The eight long vowels

aa	ëë	ee	ée	ii	oo	óó	uu
اَ	اَٴ	يَ	يَٴ	يِ	وَ	وَٴ	وِ

Wolof long vowels, such as **oo** are written in Wolofal as a vowel followed by a consonant that has neither a vowel nor a sukuun.

Write these words en Wolof	Write these words in Wolofal
وَارَ _____	_____ b o o b u
دُٴمْلُ _____	_____ b a a t b i
رَامَ _____	_____ t u u t i
دِيرُ _____	_____ ñ i i
تَائِي _____	_____ r e e r e
مُومِّي _____	_____ c o o n o
پِينُ _____	_____ d e m e e
بِ بِيَرُ _____	_____ d a a n u n a
رِيْرُو _____	_____ d a a n o o
تُوْر-تُوْرِي _____	_____ d ó o r.



## Lesson 8

### Vowels that start words

à	a	ë	e	é	i	o	ó	u
آ	آ	آ	إ	إ	إ	أ	أ	أ
آ	aa		ee	ée	ii	oo	óó	uu
Occurs only at the start of a word.	آ		إي	إي	إي	أو	أو	أو

When a vowel is the first letter of a word, it is carried by an alif that is not pronounced. We write an initial alif, then the vowel, either above it or below it.

Write these words en Wolof	Write these words in Wolofal
آئِن _____	_____ a m n a a
دُو آِن؟ _____	_____ a y a a d a
أوت ن _____	_____ à t t a a y a
موم إتم _____	_____ E e !
أذن _____	_____ i t a m
أؤوم آمر ن _____	_____ O o m n a.
آرام _____	_____ ë p p n a
أب، أب _____	_____ U u d e

## Lesson 9

### Four other consonants that look alike (h, j, η, x)

'	h	j	η	x
ع	ح	ج	ق	خ

Isolate	Final	Median	Initial	letter
ح	ح	ح	ح	h
ج	ج	ج	ج	j
خ	خ	خ	خ	x
ق	ق	ق	ق	η
ع	ع	ع	ع	* '

\*The glottal stop is not written in Wolof or in Wolofal.

ح ح ح ج ج ج خ خ خ ق ق ق ع ع ع

Write these consonants here:

---



---

## Write these words en Wolof

## Write these words in Wolofal

خِيْتِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ j i i t

تَمَخْرِيْتِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x ó o t n a

دُجُرُ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x a w a

خَاتِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ T ë j n a .

جَامِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ t i j j i

وَيُّعِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Y a x y a

خَيْخِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ r a ŋ b i

جِيخُ نَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ t a a j

مُومُ دَعِّ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b a a x n a

بَاخُ نَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x e w - x e w

جَائِي \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ d o ŋ ŋ

رَعِّ-رَعِّ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ j a a r n a

تَمَّايُو \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x o n j a m

مُرُ مَجِّ نِي \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x o r o m

## Lesson 10

### Four other consonants that look alike (f, h, q, s)

f	h	q	s
ف	ه	ق	س

Isolate	Final	Median	Initial	letter
ف	ف	ف	ف	f
ه	ه	ه	ه	h
ق	ق	ق	ق	q
س	س	س	س	s

The outmoded letters ش and چ are pronounced as ت.

### Examples

فِيْنِ نِيْنِ	بَال مَرِ أَقْ!	فِيْ نَا
فُوْفَ	مَائِي مَرِ	إِبْرَهِيْمَ
جَفِ نَ دِ!	دَفِ سَبِ	مَامِي
سُخْنِ سِ	مَانَامَ	سُوْفُ بُوْ بُوْ

## Write these words en Wolof

## Write these words in Wolofal

إِبْرَهِيمَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ d i i s o o

مَامِي \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ y a a f u s

فَتَانَا \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ f o o f a

فُوفَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ s à q m a

سُسُونَا \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ f à t t e n a

مَامَانَا \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ f e e s n a

سَفَانُ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ à q

سَفَرَسَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ x à m m e e

أَقُ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ s à m m b i

فِينِي نِي \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ s a f a r a

جَفِنَانِ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ s a f a r s i

بُ بِيَسَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ s à q a m i

بِنُقَاشَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ f a f

بِنِّيخُ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ m a a f e

## Lesson 11

### Four tall consonants (g, k, l, l+aa)

g	k	l	l + aa
گ	ك	ل	لاَ

Isolate	Final	Median	Initial	letter
گ	گ	گ	گ	g
ك	ك	ك	ك	k
ل	ل	ل	ل	l
لاَ	لاَ	لاَ	لاَ	l + aa

The letter ك has an outmoded final form: ك.

### Examples

گَاڭِ	بُڭِ	مَڭَلِ	گِپِ گَاڭِ
نِڭِ	يُولِ كُڭِ	بِڭَاڭِ	بِزُوْمِ كِڭِ
مُوْمِ لَ	يِلِ	ثَلَلِ لَخِ	لُوِي دِفِ؟
وُلْفِ لَ	بَلَا بُوْبِ	مَلَاكِ	لَاڭِ

## Write these words en Wolof

## Write these words in Wolofal

كَيَّ كَالْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ l a a l k o

بُرُوْمُ كَتْنُ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b o o g

لُوِي \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ g a a l g i

دِفْ؟ \_\_\_\_\_

لَالْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ l a a b i i r

مَكَّلْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b à k k a a r

بُكَارُ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b a a l k o

ثَلَلْ لُخْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ l o o y k a r

مَلَاكْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ g ó o r g i

بُغْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ m à g g a t

بُؤْلُ كُكْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ b a x a l a l

بِلْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ m a l a a k a

بَلَا بُوْبَ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ m o o m l a a

لَاكْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Y à l l a a k

لَاتْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ g o o g u l e

## Lesson 12

### When 'm' or 'n' takes neither a vowel nor a sukuun

When **m** precedes **b** or **p**, or when **n** precedes **c d g j k q** or **t**, it has neither a vowel nor a sukuun, nor any other diacritical mark. In this case, **m** or **n** nasalizes the other consonant.

### Examples

نَدَاخُ ndax

مَنْدِيْنْ mandin

أَنْدْ ànd

نَغَا nga

نَنْگُلْ nangul

نَنْگَا nanga

مَبَّارْ mbaar

جَمَبَّارْ jambaar

تَمْبْ tomb

Write these words en Wolof

Write these words in Wolofal

مَبُّوتَايْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ n g i r

جَنْجُو \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ n j u u m a

نَمْبِيْلْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ n d e y

مَبُّوْتُو \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ m b o o t u

نَدَّجْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ j à m b a a t

رَمْبَّارْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ r o m b a a t

دَنْجَا \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ d a n g a

نَجْبُوْتْ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ g u m b a a  
l



## Lesson 13

### When a final consonant requires a *shadda*

Every geminate consonant must carry a *shadda*, as does every nasal consonant (**mb nc nd nj nk nq or nt**). It can also carry a vowel.

#### Examples

نَبَّ nëbb	مُتَّ muc	كُتَّ gudd
دَغَّ dégg	لَكَّ lekk	سَلَّ sell
بَنَّ benn	نَيْتَّ ñépp	جَنْقَّ janq
دَمَبَّ démb	دَنْتَّ denc	أَنْدَّ ànd
گَنْجَّ gànj	تَنْكَّ tànk	يَنْتَّ yonent

Write these words en Wolof

Write these words in Wolofal

لِمَبَّ _____	_____ d o ŋ ŋ
گَنْجَّ _____	_____ s à n g
سَنْكَبَّ _____	_____ n d à n k
نَكَنَّ فَّ _____	_____ m u j j
فَنْكَّ _____	_____ b i n d
فَوُّرُ دَنْتَّ _____	_____ d e n c
پَيْتَّ مَّ _____	_____ g à n j

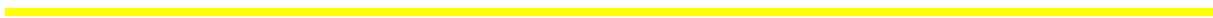
## Lesson 14

### Letters from other Senegalese languages

#### Consonants

b	β	t	y	c	d	f	f	'
پ	پ̂	ث	چ	چ̣	ط	ت	ف	ع

Write these consonants here:



#### Vowels

ã	ĩ	hamza
⊙	⊙̄	ء

## Lesson 15

### The Hindi Numerals (0 à 9)

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
०	१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९

Numbers are written either in Arabic numerals (0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9) or in Hindi numerals (० १ २ ३ ४ ५ ६ ७ ८ ९). Write Wolofal numbers in the same order as in English. Write 1234 as ١٢٣٤ and not as ٤٣٢١.

Write the following in Hindi numerals:

Today's date : \_\_\_\_\_ month : \_\_\_\_\_ and year: \_\_\_\_\_

Write en Wolof :

Write in Wolofal :

٣٦٠٥٤ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 8642

٨٧٠٠٠ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 2007

٥٣٩٢ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 9753

٩١٢٣ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 4150

### Lesson 16 The Arabic Alphabet

خ	ح	ج	ث	ت	ب	ا
kha	haa	jiim	thaa	taa	baa	alif
ص	ش	س	ز	ر	ذ	د
saad	shiin	siin	zaay	raa	thaal	daal
ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
qaaf	faa	ghayn	ayn	thaa	taa	daad
ي	و	ه	ن	م	ل	ك
yaa	waaw	ha	nuun	miim	laam	kaaf

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
◦	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹

.	,	;	:	?	!
◦	◦	◦	:	?	!
-	—	#	*	(	)
-	—	—	*	(	)
“	”	‘	’	{	}
‘	‘	۱	۱	☾	☽

## Lesson 17

### Letters that look alike

These pairs of letters can prove hard to distinguish:

**c** / **t** (ت/ت), **g** / **k** (گ/ك), **x** / **η** (خ/ع), **n** / **ñ** (ن/ني), **b** / **p** (ب/پ),

**a** / **à** (ā/ā̇), **o** / **ë** (ō/ō̇), **e** / **é** (ē/ē̇), **o** / **ó** (ō/ó), **ó** / **u** (ó/ú).

## Lesson 18

### All the Wolofal consonants and vowels

Wolofal	Wolof	Wolofal	Wolof
بببب	b	نينن	ñ
تتتت	c	قققق	ŋ
دددد	d	پپپپ	p
فففف	f	قققق	q
گگگگ	g	ررررر	r
هههه	h	سسسس	s
حححح	h	تتتت	t
جججج	j	ووووو	w
کککک	k	خخخخ	x
لللل	l	يييي	y
لا لا لا لا	l+alif	آ*, آ, ا, َ	a, aa, Aa
مممم	m	أ, ُ	À-, à
مبمبمبمب	mb	أ, ُ, ِ	Ë-, ë, ë ë
مپمپمپمپ	mp	أ, ُ, ِ, ِ	E-, e, ee
نننن	n	أ, ُ, ِ, ِ	É-, é, ée
ندندندند	nd	أ, ُ, ِ, ِ	I-, i, ii
نگنگنگنگ	ng	أ, ُ, ِ, ِ	O-, o, oo
نجنجنجنج	nj	أ, ُ, ِ, ِ	Ó-, ó, óo
نقنقنقنق	nq	أ, ُ, ِ, ِ	U-, u, uu

\* آ appears only in the initial position of a word.

