Arabic A2, lesson 6: the imperative: orders and advice

A2 Lesson 6 of 18

You give an order or advice politely, to a man, a woman or several people.

Vocabulary | Dialogue | Grammar | Exercises

Pronunciation is written in Latin letters (ā, ī, ū = long vowels; ḥ, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ẓ = emphatic consonants; ʿ = the letter ع). The Arabic is always fully vowelled.

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
اُدْخُلْ	*udkhul*	come in!
اِجْلِسْ	*ijlis*	sit down!
قِفْ	*qif*	stop! stand up!
اِفْتَحْ	*iftaḥ*	open!
أَغْلِقْ	*aghliq*	close!
اِقْرَأْ	*iqraʾ*	read!

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
اُكْتُبْ	*uktub*	write!
اِسْمَعْ	*ismaʿ*	listen!
اِذْهَبْ	*idhhab*	go!
تَعَالَ	*taʿāla*	come!
بِسُرْعَةٍ	*bi-surʿa*	quickly
حَسَنًا	*ḥasanan*	okay, good
حَاضِرٌ	*ḥāḍir*	right away (present)
اِنْتَبِهْ	*intabih*	pay attention!

KARIM

اُدْخُلِي يَا سَلْمَى وَاجْلِسِي.

udkhulī yā Salmā wa-jlisī.

Come in, Salma, and sit down.

SALMA

شُكْرًا يَا مُعَلِّمُ.

shukran yā muʿallim.

Thank you, teacher.

KARIM

اِفْتَحِي الْكِتَابَ وَاقْرَئِي الدَّرْسَ.

iftaḥī l-kitāba wa-qraʾī d-dars.

Open the book and read the lesson.

SALMA

حَاضِرٌ.

ḥāḍir.

Right away.

KARIM

لَا تَتَكَلَّمِي بِسُرْعَةٍ.

lā tatakallamī bi-surʿa.

Do not speak quickly.

SALMA

حَسَنًا.

ḥasanan.

Okay.

The imperative and the prohibition

To form the imperative start from "you" in the present (تَذْهَبُ), drop the initial تَـ and the final vowel, and add a starting alif if the word begins with two consonants: اِذْهَبْ (go!).

It changes with the person: اُكْتُبْ (to a man), اُكْتُبِي (to a woman: ـِي), اُكْتُبُوا (to several: ـُوا).

To forbid, use لَا + present with a sukun: لَا تَذْهَبْ (do not go), لَا تَذْهَبِي (do not go, f), لَا تَذْهَبُوا (do not go, pl).

Examples

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
اُكْتُبْ	*uktub*	write! (to a man)
اُكْتُبِي	*uktubī*	write! (to a woman)
اُكْتُبُوا	*uktubū*	write! (to several people)
لَا تَذْهَبْ	*lā tadhhab*	do not go! (to a man)

Ibrahim explains



The imperative looks a lot like the present “you”: you just remove the initial ta-.

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