Letter shapes and how letters join

In this lesson you will learn

- Why letters change shape inside a word
- The four shapes a letter can take
- The six letters that never join forward
- Two end shapes and the lam alif

How to use this sheet. Watch the video for this lesson first if you can. Then work through these pages out loud, at your own pace. Come back to them through the week.

Scan to hear every sound from this lesson, or go to **salehabibi.org/learn/letter-shapes**

Letters join

In written Arabic, letters join together, a bit like joined-up handwriting. When they join, most of them change shape. The good news is that the core of each letter stays the same. Usually the start and middle shapes are just shorter, with the tail dropped.

One letter, four shapes

Read each row from right to left: on its own, at the start of a word, in the middle, at the end. Say the letter's name as you go along the row and look for the part that doesn't change. Shaded rows are the letters that never join to the letter after them.

Name	End	Middle	Start	On its own
baa	ـب	ـبـ	بـ	ب
jeem	ـج	ـجـ	جـ	ج
seen	ـس	ـسـ	سـ	س
ayn'	ـع	ـعـ	عـ	ع
faa	ـف	ـفـ	فـ	ف
kaaf	ـك	ـكـ	كـ	ك
laam	ـل	ـلـ	لـ	ل
meem	ـم	ـمـ	مـ	م
haa (soft)	ـه	ـهـ	هـ	ه
yaa	ـي	ـيـ	يـ	ي
alif	ـا	ـا	ا	ا
daal	ـد	ـد	د	د
raa	ـر	ـر	ر	ر
waaw	ـو	ـو	و	و

Letter shapes and how letters join, continued

The six that never join forward

و	ز	ر	ذ	د	ا
waaw	zaa	raa	dhaal	daal	alif

After any of these, the next letter starts fresh, even in the middle of a word. That is why some words look as if they have gaps in them. A gap inside a word doesn't mean a new word has started.

Two end shapes

ة ى

Taa marbutah (right) looks like a ha with two dots on top. Alif maqsurah (left) looks like a ya without its dots. Both only ever come at the end of a word.

Lam alif

لا

When a lam is followed by an alif the two combine into this one shape. You will see it all the time, so it is worth knowing on sight.

Find the letter

These words are from Surah Al-Fatihah. Find the letter on the right inside the word and circle it. Look for its core shape. It may look shorter than it does on its own.

1	ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ	Al-Fatihah 1:2	Find ع 'ayn
2	ٱلرَّحِيمِ	Al-Fatihah 1:3	Find ح Haa (throat)
3	ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ	Al-Fatihah 1:6	Find ق qaaf
4	غَيْرِ	Al-Fatihah 1:7	Find غ ghayn
5	ٱلصِّرَٰطَ	Al-Fatihah 1:6	Find ص Saad

Check yourself

Without looking back, write the six letters that never join forward. Then say their names out loud.

Answers The six are alif, daal, dhaal, raa, zaa and waaw, as in the green box above