LEARN TO SPEAK SUDANESE ARABIC

BEGINNER'S SUDANESE ARABIC GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY GUIDE

DUYGU MENGIOGLU

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2026 Duygu Mengioglu. All rights reserved.

Published by Duygu Mengioglu

ISBN 978-1-291-50780-5

DISCLAIMER

This book is **intended for** general language-learning and informational purposes only.

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the author and publisher **make no guarantees** regarding completeness, correctness, or outcomes resulting from the use of this material.

The content **does not** constitute medical, legal, financial, or professional advice.

Readers are responsible for their own actions and decisions.

NOTE TO THE READER

This book preserves the **original right-to-left (RTL) Arabic script** in all examples and texts.

However, for **learning ease and visual clarity**, the overall page layout is not right-aligned.

This design choice helps beginners focus on **pronunciation, grammar, and sentence structure** without the added difficulty of adjusting to an unfamiliar page flow.

The writing system itself remains fully authentic; only the **page alignment** has been adapted as a **pedagogical support**.

By the end of this book, learners will be comfortable transitioning to fully right-aligned Arabic texts in real-world reading.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction 1
2. Sounds and Writing System 5
3. Basic Sentence Structure and Nouns 15
4. Pronouns and Essential Vocabulary 27
5. Verbs and Basic Tenses 35
6. Adjectives, Prepositions, and Conjunctions 53
7. Everyday Expressions 63
8. Practice and Review 85
9. Reference and Resources 95
10. Answer Key 99
11. Verb Conjugations 109
12. Vocabulary List 171

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This guide builds the grammar and everyday vocabulary needed for simple conversations in Central Urban Sudanese Arabic, the variety associated with Greater Khartoum. **Its focus is useful beginner communication:** introducing yourself, asking for help, understanding a price, and talking about ordinary activities.

A strong foundation makes unfamiliar conversations easier to follow. Knowing how to ask where something is helps you find a shop; recognizing a negative prevents you from confusing "available" with "not available"; and understanding time expressions helps you distinguish an earlier visit from a future plan.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK EFFECTIVELY

The chapters move from sounds and short sentences to verbs, descriptions, and everyday exchanges. A manageable routine is to read one explanation, say its examples aloud, and complete the related practice before checking the answer key. Three short sessions in a week can cover one topic without turning review into a long memorization task.

On a later day, cover the English meanings and try to recall them, then reverse the process. Keep a few useful sentences in a notebook and change details that you already know, such as a name or place. Chapter 10 collects verb forms, while Chapter 11 provides themed vocabulary for repeated review.

ABOUT SUDANESE ARABIC

Sudanese Arabic includes several regional varieties, and this book follows the urban central variety associated with Khartoum, Khartoum North, and Omdurman. Arabic developed in Sudan through a long history of movement and contact, including contact with Nubian and other Sudanese languages.

The spoken variety has its own familiar vocabulary, pronunciation, and conversational patterns, while sharing many words with other forms of Arabic. Modern Standard Arabic is important in formal writing and other public settings, but its full system of case endings and its textbook question forms are not the everyday speaking model used here. Greetings and social conversation are useful entry points into Sudanese family life, visiting, and ordinary encounters.

Examples:

السلام عليكم. (as-salaam 'alaykum) — Peace be upon you; a widely used greeting.

كيف؟ (keef) — How are things? A brief conversational greeting.

الحمد لله. (al-hamdu lillaah) — Thank God; often part of a reply about well-being.

PRACTICE SECTION

Answer each prompt honestly in one or two English sentences.

1- Why are you learning Sudanese Arabic?

_____

_____

2- When will you practice, and how often will you study each week?

_____

_____

3- Which skill would you most like to improve, and why?

CHAPTER 2
SOUNDS AND WRITING SYSTEM

ALPHABET/SCRIPT OVERVIEW

Sudanese Arabic is commonly written with the Arabic script. The basic alphabet has 28 letters, and words run from right to left. Most letters connect to neighboring letters and change shape according to their position in a word. A change of shape does not create a different letter: the dots and the basic outline help you recognize it.

The script mainly records consonants and long vowels. Short vowels can be shown by small marks above or below a letter, but ordinary messages often leave these marks out. This book supplies a simplified reading guide in parentheses so that an unmarked Arabic word is not a pronunciation puzzle. Spoken Sudanese spelling is not governed by one universally followed spelling system; the forms here are kept consistent rather than presented as the only possible spellings.

The letters ز, ر, ذ, د, ا, and و connect to a preceding letter on their right but do not connect forward to a following letter on their left. A visible gap inside a word can therefore be normal. The combined shape لا represents ل followed by ا, not an additional alphabet letter. The list gives familiar English sound starting points, with qualifications where English has no close equivalent.

The Arabic Alphabet

ا (alif) — Often marks a long aa, approximately the vowel in “father”; it can also carry a hamza.

ب (baa) — b, as in “book”.

ت (taa) — t, as in “tea”.

ث (thaa) — The spelling may correspond to t as in “tea” or s as in “sun” in familiar Sudanese words; careful speech may use th as in “think”.

ج (jiim) — A sound near j in “jam”; many Sudanese speakers make a tighter, less friction-filled sound.

ح (haa) — A deeper breathy h; begin with “hat”, but English has no exact match.

خ (khaa) — kh, like the final sound in the Scottish pronunciation of “loch”; not k followed by h.

د (daal) — d, as in “door”.

ذ (dhaal) — Often d as in “day” or z as in “zoo” in familiar spoken words; th as in “this” can occur in careful speech.

ر (raa) — A tapped or lightly rolled r; “red” is only a starting point, not an exact English match.

ز (zaay) — z, as in “zoo”.

س (siin) — s, as in “sun”.

ش (shiin) — sh, as in “ship”.

ص (saad) — A fuller, deeper s; compare “sun” while drawing the back of the tongue slightly back.

ض (daad) — A fuller, deeper d; compare “door”, without treating it as the ordinary د sound.

ط (taa) — A fuller, deeper t; compare “tea”, without treating it as the ordinary ت sound.

ظ (zaa) — Often a fuller z in spoken words; “zoo” is an approximation, not an exact match.

ع ('een) — A voiced throat sound with no English equivalent; the vowel in “up” is a starting point for a gently tightened throat, not the sound itself.

غ (gheen) — gh, made with friction toward the back of the mouth; begin near g in “go”, but do not close off the airflow.

ف (faa) — f, as in “fish”.

ق (gaaf) — Frequently g as in “go” in this variety; a deeper q occurs in some careful or formal pronunciations.

ك (kaaf) — k, as in “kite”.

ل (laam) — l, as in “lamp”.

م (miim) — m, as in “moon”.

ن (nuun) — n, as in “name”.

ه (haa) — h, as in “hat”; lighter than ح.

و (waaw) — w as in “water”, or a long vowel near “food” or “go”, depending on the word.

ي (yaa) — y as in “yes”, or a long vowel near “see” or “say”, depending on the word.

Other Written Forms and Marks

ء (hamza) — A brief closure in the throat, like the break some English speakers make in “uh-oh”.

أ (alif with hamza) — A hamza written above alif; the following vowel depends on the word.

إ (alif with hamza below) — A hamza below alif, commonly associated with an initial i sound.

آ (alif with madda) — A written combination associated with a hamza followed by long aa.

ة (taa marbuuta) — A common feminine ending, often pronounced a at the end of an isolated word; t appears in many attached or possessive forms.

ى (alif maqsuura) — A final letter shape used for a long aa in words such as some names; it is not a dotted ي.

◌َ (fatha) — A short a vowel written above a consonant.

◌ِ (kasra) — A short i vowel written below a consonant.

◌ُ (damma) — A short u vowel written above a consonant.

ْ (sukuun) — Marks a consonant with no following short vowel.

ّ (shadda) — Marks a consonant held longer, represented by doubled letters in the reading guide.

ً (tanwiin) — Appears in some established expressions, including the spelling of “thank you”; ordinary colloquial nouns do not need a complete set of formal case endings.

Examples:

باب (baab) — door

بيت (beet) — house

كتاب (kitaab) — book

قلم (galam) — pen

شاي (shaay) — tea

موية (mooya) — water

زول (zool) — person

سوق (suug) — market

دكّان (dukkaan) — shop

شكراً (shukran) — thank you

English Alphabet Reference for the Reading Guide

The reading guide uses familiar English letters and letter combinations, not a separate Sudanese alphabet. The complete English alphabet is included here as a reference. These English examples identify the letters; the vowel combinations used for Sudanese pronunciation are explained in the next section.

A – like in “apple”.

B – like in “book”.

C – like in “cat”.

D – like in “dog”.

E – like in “egg”.

F – like in “fish”.

G – like in “go”.

H – like in “hat”.

I – like in “ink”.

J – like in “jam”.

K – like in “kite”.

L – like in “lamp”.

M – like in “moon”.

N – like in “name”.

O – like in “orange”.

P – like in “pen”.

Q – like in “queen”.

R – like in “red”.

S – like in “sun”.

T – like in “tea”.

U – like in “up”.

V – like in “van”.

W – like in “water”.

X – like in “box”.

Y – like in “yes”.

Z – like in “zoo”.

PRONUNCIATION BASICS

Vowel length helps distinguish words and word forms in Sudanese Arabic. A long vowel lasts longer than a short one; it does not simply mean “say the vowel louder”. In the reading guide, aa is near the vowel

in “father”, ii is near “see”, and uu is near “food”. The spellings ee and oo represent long, steady vowels near “say” and “go”, with less movement toward a second vowel than many English speakers use.

The short vowels a, i, and u are briefer. Their exact sound changes with neighboring consonants and with the speaker, so the reading guide is a practical approximation rather than a sound-by-sound technical notation.

The combinations sh, kh, and gh each represent one consonant sound. An apostrophe usually marks ع, a throat sound; in a few words it also marks the brief closure written ء.

It is not an instruction to insert an English r. Ordinary h, s, d, t, and z are also used for their deeper Arabic counterparts, whose differences remain visible in the Arabic spelling.

Stress is the stronger beat within a word. A long vowel before a final consonant often attracts this beat, as in kitaab and suug; many other words place it earlier.

A long vowel and a stressed vowel are not the same thing, and attached endings can change the rhythm of a word. Doubled consonants deserve particular attention: dukkaan contains a longer k, not an extra vowel between two separate k sounds. In familiar Sudanese words, ق is often pronounced g, while ج should not automatically be given the Egyptian g pronunciation.

Examples:

قلم (galam) — pen; ق is represented by g.

قريب (gariib) — near; the ii is long.

كتاب (kitaab) — book; keep aa long.

بيت (beet) — house; use a steady ee vowel.

زول (zool) — person; use a steady oo vowel.

فول (fuul) — fava beans; use a long uu vowel.

كبير (kabiir) — big; keep the second vowel long.

شاي (shaay) — tea; sh is one consonant sound.

خلاص (khalaas) — finished; enough; kh is one back-of-mouth sound.

غالي (ghaali) — expensive; gh is voiced.

دكّان (dukkaan) — shop; hold the k before continuing.

موية (mooya) — water; do not read the spelling as a formal Arabic case-marked noun.

COMMON SOUND PITFALLS

English spelling habits can hide useful distinctions. A short vowel should not be stretched simply because a word has only one strong beat, and doubled consonants should not be reduced to a single quick consonant. The same simplified Latin letter may stand for two different Arabic sounds, especially h and the deeper consonants; the Arabic spelling identifies the contrast when the English approximation cannot.

The following pairs draw attention to contrasts in sound, length, or rhythm. Some differ in more than one sound. They are not pairs of interchangeable spellings, and the English meanings should be learned with the whole word.

Examples:

قلب — كلب (galb — kalb) — heart — dog; contrast g and k.

سوق — شوق (suug — shoog) — market — longing; contrast s and sh, and listen to the vowels.

بيت — بت (beet — bit) — house — girl/daughter; contrast a long vowel with a short one.

فول — فيل (fuul — fiil) — fava beans — elephant; contrast uu and ii.

درس — درّس (daras — darras) — he studied — he taught; the second verb has a doubled r.

حار — هوا (haar — hawa) — hot — air/wind; the first h is deeper than the second.

عين — وين ('een — ween) — eye — where; the first word begins with a throat sound, not w.

باب — بيت (baab — beet) — door — house; keep aa distinct from ee.

PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION RULES

Arabic writing has no upper-case and lower-case letter pairs. A name or the start of a sentence therefore does not require a capital Arabic letter, although its English translation follows English capitalization. Full stops and exclamation marks serve familiar purposes. The Arabic question mark is ؟ and the Arabic comma is ،; when an Arabic sentence is read right to left, its final punctuation appears at the left-hand end.

Numerals may appear as 0–9 or as ٠–٩. Number sequences retain their internal order rather than being reversed to match the surrounding Arabic text. In this book, Arabic examples are followed by a separate left-to-right reading guide and English meaning. Punctuation belongs to the Arabic sentence, not to the beginning of its translation. The sentences in this section are reading models; their grammar is developed in later chapters.

Examples:

أنا سارة. (ana saara) — I am Sara.

هو علي. (hu 'ali) — He is Ali.

دي موية. (dii mooya) — This is water.

دا كتاب. (daa kitaab) — This is a book.

كيف؟ (keef) — How are things?

دا شنو؟ (daa shinu) — What is this?

البيت وين؟ (al-beet ween) — Where is the house?

إنت كويس؟ (inta kuwayyis) — Are you well? Addressing a man.

شكراً! (shukran) — Thank you!

شاي، موية، وفول. (shaay, mooya, wa fuul) — Tea, water, and fava beans.

Cultural Tip

Sudanese messages can represent the same spoken word in more than one familiar spelling. Recognizing the pronunciation is often more useful than treating a different informal spelling as a different word.

PRACTICE SECTION

Fill in the Blanks

Complete the missing letter or written mark. The blank is inside the word, not at the beginning or end.

1- كـ_____ـاب

(ki_____aab) — (the word means “book”)

2- دُك_____ـان

(duk_____aan) — (add the small mark that holds the consonant longer)

True/False

Decide whether each statement is True or False.

1- A written shadda shows that a consonant is held longer; it does not simply mark a stressed syllable.

2- An Arabic question mark belongs at the end of the question, which is the left-hand end of the Arabic sentence.

3- The familiar Sudanese pronunciation represented by g in galam is the same consonant as k in kalb.