

INFO SHEET - Arabic



Why you should study Arabic

The Khan el Khalili souk is located in the heart of Cairo's Islamic district. Filled with merchants and artisans, the souk (which means "marketplace or bazaar" in Arabic) has been around for almost 2000 years and on any given day the cobbled streets are filled with the cries of vendors, fragrant smoke of barbecuing meat, and a general hubbub of people buying, selling and haggling as they have done for centuries. And the language you'll hear in these streets is Arabic, How exciting would it be to join the conversation?!

At Carleton, Arabic classes place special emphasis on both spoken and written language as well as cultural aspects of countries where Arabic is the dominant language. Classes are diverse and each student has his or her own reason for studying it:

- pursuing religious study
- developing proficiency for diplomatic/international postings
- travel and discover different Arabic cultures and regions
- reading early literature and poetry in the original Arabic

Our 1st & 2nd year courses are NOT intended for those who already speak Arabic or have a significant background in the language.

About the Language

According to UNESCO (2012), there are approximately 300 million native speakers of Arabic worldwide of whom almost 400,000 live in Canada.¹ Different dialects of Arabic are spoken across the Middle East: North African, Egyptian, Sudanese, Levantine, Gulf, and Iraqi Arabic. All are variations based on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which comes from classical Arabic found in the Qur'an, holy book of Islam.

In addition to its religious importance, Arabic is an important language for international diplomacy and international business, and is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

Proficiency in Arabic may also prove an asset for people pursuing careers in finance, human services, and medicine right here in Canada where Arabic speakers form an integral part of our multicultural fabric.

Some interesting facts about Arabic include:

- Arabic is written from right to left using cursive (joined up) writing except for numbers, which are written left to right.
- Arabic has 28 consonants, 3 long vowels and 3 short vowels known as diacritics that are written above or below letters.
e.g. كَتَبَ [kataba] - he wrote
كُتِبَ [kutiba] - it was written
كُتُبَ [kutub] - books
- In the 7th century, Arabic-speaking invaders entered Spain. Today evidence of their language remains, mixed in with Spanish: "barrio", Spanish for "neighbourhood" comes from Arabic "barri" meaning "city limits"; "almohada", or "pillow" from "al-mikadda"; and "Azúcar" or "sugar" comes from "as-sukkar" in Arabic.²

carleton.ca/slals/languages/

¹ Stats Can, 2011

² SpanishDict.com