

Hamza



Arabic alphabet	
ي و ه ن م ل ك ق ف غ ع ظ ط ض ص ش س ز ر ذ د خ ح ج ث ت ب ا	
Arabic script	
•	History
•	Transliteration
•	Diacritics
•	Hamza
•	Numerals
•	Numeration
•	v
•	t
•	e ^[1]

Hamza (Arabic: هَمْزَة, *hamzah*) (ء) is a letter in the Arabic alphabet, representing the glottal stop [ʔ]. Hamza is not one of the 28 "full" letters, and owes its existence to historical inconsistencies in the standard writing system. It is derived from the Arabic letter *ʿayn*. In the Phoenician and Aramaic alphabets, from which the Arabic alphabet is descended, the glottal stop was expressed by *aleph* (א), continued by *alif* (ا) in the Arabic alphabet. However, alif was used to express both a glottal stop and a long vowel /aː/. To indicate that a glottal stop, and not a mere vowel, was intended, hamza was added diacritically to alif. In modern orthography, under certain circumstances, hamza may also appear on the line, as if it were a full letter, independent of an alif.

Etymology

Hamzah is a noun from the verb هَمَزَ *hamaz-a* meaning 'to prick, goad, drive' or 'to provide (a letter or word) with hamzah'.^[2]

Hamzat waṣl

The hamzah letter on its own always represents *hamzat qatʿ* (همزة قطع); that is, a phonemic glottal stop. Compared to this, *hamzat waṣl* or *hamzat al-waṣl* (همزة الوصل) is a non-phonemic glottal stop produced automatically at the beginning of an utterance. Although it can be written as alif carrying a *waṣlah* sign ٱ, it is usually indicated by a regular alif without a hamzah. It occurs, for example, in the definite article *al-*, *ism*, *ibn*, imperative verbs and the perfective aspect of verb forms VII to X, but is not pronounced following a vowel: (e.g. *al-baytu l-kabīru* for written البيت الكبير). It occurs only at the beginning of a word following a preposition or the definite article.

Orthography

The hamzah can be written alone, as if it was a letter, or with a carrier, in which case it becomes a diacritic:

- Alone: (only one isolated form, the same form being also sometimes used in initial positions without perching it over an alif, and without joining with any following letter like most Arabic letters in initial positions):

Position in word:	Isolated	Final	Medial	Initial
Glyph form:	ء	(none)	(none)	(none)

- By itself as a *high hamzah* (not used in Arabic language; only one isolated form, but actually used in medial and final positions where it will be non joining), after any Arabic letter (if that letter has an initial or medial form, these forms will be changed to isolated or final forms respectively):

Position in word:	Isolated	Final	Medial	Initial
Glyph form:	◻	(none)	(none)	(none)

- Combined with a letter:
- Above or below an alif:

Position in word:	Isolated	Final	Medial	Initial
Glyph form:	أ	آ	آ	أ

Position in word:	Isolated	Final	Medial	Initial
Glyph form:	إ	آ	آ	إ

- Above a wāw:

Position in word:	Isolated	Final	Medial	Initial
Glyph form:	ؤ	ؤ	ؤ	ؤ

- Above a dotless yā', also called *hamzah 'alá nabrah / yā' hamzah*. Joined medially and finally in Arabic, other languages written in Arabic-based script may have it initially as well:

Position in word:	Isolated	Final	Medial	Initial
Glyph form:	ئ	ئ	ئ	ئ

Summary

- Initial hamzah is always placed over or under an alif, or sometimes over a dotless *yā'*. Otherwise, surrounding vowels determine the seat of the hamzah – but, preceding long vowels or diphthongs are ignored (as are final short vowels).
- *i*- over *u*- over *a*- if there are two conflicting vowels that "count"; on the line if there are none.
- As a special case, *ā'a*, *ū'a* and *aw'a* require hamzah on the line, instead of over an alif as one would expect from rule #1. (See III.1b below.)
- Two adjacent alifs are never allowed. If the rules call for this, replace the combination by a single alif-maddah.

Detailed description

- Logically, hamzah is just like any other letter, but it may be written in different ways. It has no effect on the way other letters are written. In particular, surrounding long vowels are written just as they always are, regardless of the "seat" of the hamzah—even if this results in the appearance of two consecutive *wāws* or *yā's*.
- Hamzah can be written in four ways: on its own ("on the line") or over an alif, *wāw*, or *yā'*, called the "seat" of the hamzah. When written over *yā'*, the dots that would normally be written underneath are omitted.
- When, according to the rules below, a hamzah with an alif seat would occur before an alif which represents the vowel *ā*, a single alif is instead written with the maddah symbol over it.
- The rules for hamzah depend on whether it occurs as the initial, middle, or final letter (not sound) in a word. (Thus, final short inflectional vowels do not count, but when *-an* is written as alif + nunation, it does count and the hamzah is considered medial.)

I. If the hamzah is initial:

- If the following letter is a short vowel: *fathah* (a) (as in أفراد *afrād*) or *ḍammah* (u) (as in أصول *uṣūl*), the hamzah is written over a place-holding alif; *kasrah* (i) (as in إسلام *islām*) the hamzah is written under a place-holding alif. This is called "hamzah on a wall."
- If the letter following the hamzah is an alif itself: (as in أكل *ākul*) alif maddah will occur.

II. If the hamzah is final:

- If a short vowel precedes: the hamzah is written over the letter (*alif*, *wāw*, or *yā'*) corresponding to the short vowel.
- Otherwise: the hamzah is written on the line (as in شيء *shay'* "thing").

III. If the hamzah is medial:

- If a long vowel or diphthong precedes, the seat of the hamzah is determined mostly by what follows:
 - If *i* or *u* follows, the hamzah is written over *yā'* or *wāw*, accordingly.
 - Otherwise, the hamzah would be written on the line. If a *yā'* precedes, however, this would conflict with the stroke joining the *yā'* to the following letter, so the hamzah is written over *yā'*. (as in جئت)
- Otherwise, both preceding and following vowels have an effect on the hamzah.
 - If there is only one vowel (or two of the same kind), that vowel determines the seat (*alif*, *wāw*, or *yā'*).
 - If there are two conflicting vowels, *i* takes precedence over *u*, *u* over *a*, so *mi'ah* 'hundred' is written مئة, with hamzah over the *yā'*.
 - *Alif-maddah* will occur if appropriate.

Not surprisingly given the complexity of these rules, there is some disagreement.

- Barron's *201 Arabic Verbs* follows these rules exactly (although the sequence *ū'ū* does not occur; see below).
- John Mace's *Teach Yourself Arabic Verbs and Essential Grammar* presents alternative forms in almost all cases when hamzah is followed by a long *ū*. The motivation appears to be to avoid two *wāws* in a row. Generally, the choice is between the form following the rules here, or an alternative form using hamzah over *yā'* in all cases.

Example forms are *mas'ul*, *yajī'ūna*, *yashā'ūna*. Exceptions:

- In the sequence *ū'ū*; e.g., *yasū'ūna*, the alternatives are hamzah on the line, or hamzah over *yā'*, when the rules here would call for hamzah over *wāw*. Perhaps the resulting sequence of three *wāw*s would be especially repugnant?
- In the sequence *yaqra'ūna*, the alternative form has hamzah over alif, not *yā'*.
- The forms *yabṭu'ūna*, *ya'ūbu* have no alternative form. (But note *yaqra'ūna* with the same sequence of vowels.)
- Haywood and Nahmad's *A new Arabic Grammar of the Written Language* does not write the paradigms out in full, but in general agrees with John Mace's book, including the alternative forms—and sometimes lists a third alternative where the entire sequence *'ū* is written as a single hamzah over *wāw* instead of as two letters.
- *Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum...* presents paradigms with hamzah written the same way throughout, regardless of what the rules above say. Thus *yabda'ūna* with hamzah only over alif, *yajī'ūna* with hamzah only over *yā'*, *yaqra'ūna* with hamzah only over alif, although this is not allowed in any of the previous three books. (This appears to be an over-generalization on the part of the *al-Kitaab* writers.)

Latin representations

There are different ways to represent hamzah in Latin transliteration:

- In the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the sound of the glottal stop is represented by a dotless question mark Template:Glottal stop (letter).
- There is a tradition of using ' , the simple apostrophe; whereas a reversed one, or backquote < ` >, represents 'ayn (ع).
- Some standard transliterations, such as DIN 31635, transliterate it with a modifier letter right half ring ' and others such as ALA-LC with the modifier letter apostrophe ' .
- Different unstandardized symbols: such as 2 in Arabic chat alphabet.

References

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Arabic-script_sidebar&action=edit

[2] Wehr, Hans. Edited by Cowan, J. M. The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Arabic. Otto Harrassovich KG, 1994. همز *hamaza*.

External links

- Interactive lesson for learning hamzah (http://www.salaamarabic.com/lesson/plan/1494/glottal_stop)

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