

Overview

Population

The Arab world encompasses the region from the Atlantic Ocean near northern Africa and east to the Arabian Sea. Its northern boundary is at the Mediterranean Sea, while the southern portion extends to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean. In general, this area is tied together as a region because all the countries, 22 in total, are Arabic-speaking. Some of the countries list Arabic as their only official language, while others speak it in addition to other languages. The Arab world has a total population of approximately 422 million people.

Education System (for children from Arab countries)

Most of the information about education in the Arab countries in this document is based on the Saudi national curriculum as most of the children in Hampshire come from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. The curricula of the other Arab countries are generally very similar.

- In most of the Arab countries children aged 3–5 attend kindergarten, although this is not compulsory: KG1 or Lower KG (LKG) for four year olds (no younger than three years and nine months) and KG2 or Upper KG (UKG) for five year olds.
- Many private and international schools offer the option of pre-school care for ages 3 and over.
- Primary education in most of the countries in the Arab World lasts six years. All national primary schools are day schools, not co-educational.
- In order to move on to intermediate education, children must pass an examination at the end of Grade 6 of primary school and obtain the Elementary Education Certificate.
- Intermediate education in most of the countries lasts three years.

- Secondary education in most of the countries lasts three years and this is the final stage of general education. After the intermediate education, students opt for either general or specialised secondary education.
- Higher education in most of the countries lasts four years in the fields of humanities and social sciences and five to six years in the fields of medicine, engineering and pharmacy.
- In the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia, strict gender separation is maintained throughout the educational system, with the only exceptions being at kindergarten and some private elementary schools in the first and second grades.

SEN:

- Children with special educational needs learn alongside other students in mainstream schools, providing they meet the school entry requirements.
- There are no specific SEN public schools in most Arab countries; some private ones can be found in main cities.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age

- Formal schooling in most of the Arab countries begins when a child is six years old (no younger than five years and nine months at the start of the school year).
- Formal schooling begins from year one. There is no reception year.

School day

- The school week consists of five days and the weekend break is two days long (Friday and Saturday).
- The day begins as early as 06:30 or 07:00 and ends around 15:00, depending on the school, the grade, the nature of the city and the amount of time needed to collect students from surrounding areas.
- There are no teaching assistants in schools.
- In general education, the students stay in their classrooms while the teachers move from class to class.
- Children must take middle and high school admissions tests. They can only go to the best schools if they achieve high grades.

Curriculum

- Up to Year 3 pupils are mainly taught Arabic (primarily reading, writing and rhymes), Numeracy, RE (mainly topics related to Islam), Physical Education (for boys) and Art.
- Extra subjects are taught from Year 4 to Year 6, such as Arabic Grammar, History, Geography, Science and Home Economics (for girls).
- Most of the teachers use chalk boards, however interactive white boards are available to the teachers who have knowledge of the technology.
- Pupils in Arabic countries must pass a school-leaving examination to progress from primary school to intermediate school and obtain the primary education certificate. Normally this takes place at the end of year 6.
- Pupils must pass the national examination at the end of intermediate school (the 9th year of schooling) to gain entrance to secondary school.
- In most of the Arab countries the curriculum places great importance on Islamic studies. This includes memorisation and understanding of the Holy Qur'an and the prophet's sayings and actions.

Literacy

- Arabic is written from right to left.
- Each letter has a basic form, but modifications in their shapes occur according to their position in words.
- Many letters share the same shape and are only distinguished by diacritic.
- Arabic letters are joined up in an artistic design called Islamic calligraphy or Arabic calligraphy, which is predominantly in use in editions of the Holy Qur'an as well as in mosques.

Maths

- Mathematical symbols for multiplication, division, addition and subtraction are the same as in English.
- Numbers are read 'back to front', e.g. '21' is read as 'one and twenty' in Arabic.
- Methods used in teaching maths are generally similar to those used in English.

Parental involvement and attendance in Arab countries

- There are no regular parental meetings in schools in Arab countries.
- Generally Arab schools do not encourage parents to get involved in school affairs. Some do not even allow parents to speak directly to their children's teachers. Instead, parents speak to school administrators who serve as the communication link between parents and teachers. The school - parent relationship is often formal and restricted to certain areas such as attendance of special events (e.g. concerts, sports tournaments, and science fairs) and volunteering for school projects, programs and trips.
- Pupil absenteeism is widespread in most Arab countries but its impact on achievement in mathematics and sciences is not consistent across those countries. For example, research shows that the average achievement increases with pupil's absenteeism in Saudi Arabia and Syria. In Saudi Arabia absenteeism is mainly due to the prevalence of tutoring while in Syria it is more likely due to the teaching role of the parents at home. In most Arab countries however, performance decreases with pupil absenteeism.
- Parents know that most schools do not offer high quality education, and in the few good schools that do, schools allow children to take their books and exercise books home so parents can help out with their children's homework, projects, and exam preparation.

Cultural sensitivities

- Arab and Muslim girls should be given a separate place to change for PE.
- The most suitable sportswear for boys and girls that respects the requirements of Islamic modesty is a track suit and in addition for girls a head scarf that is tied and secured in a proper manner.
- Arab and Muslim girls should be allowed to wear a full-length loose school skirt or loose trousers, a long sleeved shirt and a head scarf.

- The Eid festivals should be granted as authorised absences for the observance of the special Eid prayer and celebrations.
- Schools should make arrangements for Muslim pupils who wish to perform daily prayers in school.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Spelling

- There are no capital letters in Arabic.
- Arabic sounds are written as they are heard.
- Double letters are very rare in Arabic.

Punctuation

- Punctuation marks are not always used correctly in Arabic.
- Some punctuation marks in Arabic look different from the English counter parts (e.g. the Arabic comma points the opposite way).

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

Various categories are marked on verbs

- Two tenses present and past. The future is indicated by a prefix **Sa** - or **Sawfaa**.
- Two voices (active, passive).
- Two genders (masculine, feminine).
- Three persons (first, second, third).
- Three numbers (single, dual, plural).

Modal verbs

There are no modal verbs in Arabic. This, for example, leads to "It is possible that I am late" (i.e. I may be late.) Another common mistake is to infer that an auxiliary is needed and make errors such as, *Do I must do that?*

Gender/Articles

The grammatical gender of nouns is one of two

- A noun may be masculine or feminine.
- The default grammatical gender is masculine and a word does not have to have anything special to reflect this.

Useful classroom words

Greetings

Welcome	marHaba
Hello	assalamu alaykum
Thank you	shukran
Please	minfadlak(m)/minfadlik(f)
Goodbye	ma` assalama
Morning	SabaH
Afternoon	bad athuhur
Are you OK?	hul anta bikhir

School Routine

School playground	saahat almadrassa
School office	maktab almadrassa
Hall	qaa ah
School	madrasah
Assembly	ijtimaa` madrasee
Toilets	hamaam/mirhaaD
School field	malab almadrassa
Classroom	fasil
Registration	tasjeel alHudoor wa alghiyaab

Computer suite	ghurfat alhaasooB
Tutor group	majmooat almushrif
Break time	alfusaHa
Outside	alkhaarj <u>or</u> fi alkhhaarj

Inside	addaakhil <u>or</u> fi addaakhilire
Fire drill	munabih alHareeq atajreebi
Packed lunch	maHfathat alghadaa`
School dinner	alghadaa` almadrasee

School nurse	mumariDat almadrassa
First aid room	ghurfat alisafaat alawaleeyah
Staff room	ghurfat almualameen
Lunchtime	waqt alghadaa`
School uniform	azzayi almadrasee
Library	maktabah
Reading book	kitaab alqiraah/almuTaalah

Library book	kitaab almaktabah
Copy	nuskah
Label	mulSaq
Colour	loan
Pen	qalam
Pencil	qalam ruSaaS
Yes	na`m
No	laa`

Days of the week

Monday	ali`thnayn
Tuesday	aththulaathaa`
Wednesday	ala`rbiaa`
Thursday	alkhamees
Friday	aljumua`
Saturday	assabit
Sunday	alaHad
Weekend	nahaayat alu`sbooa`

Numbers

Zer	sifir	One	waHid
Two	ithnayn	Three	thalaathah
Four	arba`h	Five	khamsah
Six	sitah	Seven	saba`h
Eight	thamaanyah	Nine	tisa`h
Ten	a`sharah	60	siteen
20	i`shreen	70	sab`een
30	thalaatheen	80	thamaneen
40	arba`een	90	tis`een
50	khamseen	100	mi`ah

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner	a`mal ma`shareek
Use your dictionary	istakhdim alma`jam
Do you understand?	Hul tafham?
Talk about this at home	takalam a`n hathih fi Albayt
Translate these words at home	tarjim haathih alkalimat fi albayt
You can write in Arabic	Umkin an taktub biala`rabi
Write in sentences	Aktub jumal
Fill in the blanks	amla` alfaraghaat
Annotate	aDif tawDeeHat/ bayaanaat
Highlight	ajalhaa akthar wuDooHan
Draft	muswadah
Please be quiet	Min fadalak
Come here please	khaleek haadi taa`aal huna min fadlak
Sit on the carpet	ajlis ala asijaadah
Where does it hurt?	Ayna makan alalam?