

The Accusative Case

The accusative case is applied to the direct object of the verb. For example “I studied the book” is rendered in Arabic as درستُ الكتابَ. Notice several things about this sentence.

First, the pronoun for “I,” أنا is not used in the sentence. Such pronouns are usually not used, since the verb conjugation tells us who the subject is. These pronouns are used sometimes for emphasis.

Second, notice that I left most of the verb unvowelled. The only vowel I used is the vowel that tells you for which person the verb is being conjugated. Sometimes you may see such a vowel included in an authentic Arab text if there is a chance of ambiguity. However, usually the verb, like all words, will be completely unvocalized.

Notice that the verb ends in a vowel and that the vowel will elide the hamza on the definite article.

Fourth, the direct object of the verb, الكتابَ ends in a fatha. The fatha is the accusative case marker.

Look at this sentence: درستُ وثيقةً “I studied a document.” Notice that two fathas are used here. The second fatha gives us the nunation. This is just like the other two cases, nominative and genitive where the second dhanuna and second kasra provide the nunation. So, we use one fatha if the word is definite and two fathas if the word is indefinite. But there is just a little bit more. Look at the following: درستُ كتاباً

This is “I studied a book.” Here the indefinite direct object ends in two fathas but we have also added an alif. What is this?

Here is the rule. An indefinite word which does not end in a ة will have an alif attached to it in addition to the two fathas when that word is in the accusative. The alif is not pronounced. The alif must be written.

Let's look at the rule carefully. "An indefinite word that does not end in a ة," means words like طالب , كتاب and سلام. These words will all have the two fathas attached to them when they are accusative. But after you do that, you add an alif. The alif is a spelling convention and will not be pronounced. However, you must write the alif. As you know, the short vowels in Arabic, including the case endings, are almost never written. However, the alif of the accusative case must be. Thus, the sentence above would appear in a newspaper like this: درست كتابا. The fathas often will not be there, but the alif will.

If a word ends in a ة then we do not add the alif. The word طالبة is an example. If we make it accusative we will write two fathas over the o but we will not write the alif – طالبة.

Since you have had Arabic before, you know that some words have what are called "broken plurals".

The broken plural of طالب is طلاب. The rule about adding the alif applies to broken plurals as well.

Therefore the indefinite accusative of طلاب is طلاباً. Many students believe that the alif is not added to broken plurals. But it is added to them unless they belong to a category of words called diptotes (won't you diptote, through the tulips...). Some diptotes are singular, some are plural. They have different rules for their case endings. They are discussed in detail in [Part III](#) of this book. For now, you have no need to deal with diptotes.

Remember, the alif is only used for the indefinite accusative and only for words which do not end in a ة. Any word ending in ة will not have the alif. That means, do not write the alif on such a word