THE DUAL IN ARABIC

In Arabic, “plural” always means three or more of something. When there are two of anything—humans, objects, ideas—they take a special form called the dual. Although there is a lot of information here, don’t confuse length with difficulty. You will find most of it is very repetitive. Forming the dual basically means attaching one of two endings to words to turn them from singular into duals. If you learn those, it will be fairly simple.

Please read the sections that follow, then complete the exercises for each. We put all the exercises on a separate paper so you can turn it in, but please go back and forth when the instructions tell you.

First, Read and Be Amazed:

Dual:

Arabic uses a special form for two of something or a “pair” of something. This is very important when talking about family members, as it is very common to have two brothers, sisters, etc. The normal form of the dual is to add ان to the singular:

كلب 🡨 كلبان

سيارة 🡨 سيارتان

Note: It is redundant to add the number “two” to the dual (like saying “a pair of two gloves”) and not done by native speakers. The dual by itself means two of something.

Nouns are made dual by the addition of the suffix ان to the noun. Thus, “two books” is rendered كتابان. The ان ending is for the subject case. As you may remember, Arabic nouns are distinguished by the role they play in the sentence. For objects and objects of prepositions we would have كتابين This is pronounced “kitabayn.” this dual ending will appear like this – ين – and will thus look like a plural but it will sound differently. When you are reading, context will tell you whether you are reading the dual or the plural.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Function | ending | example |
| subject | أن “an” | كتابان |
| object | يْن “ayn” | كتابيْن |
| after a preposition | يْن “ayn” | كتابيْن |

 The following sentences will give you some examples:

1. هناك كتابان على الطاولة
2. قرأتُ كتابيْن أمس
3. وجدتُ اسمه في كتابيْن

For feminine words we add the same endings onto the ة which will be written as a regular ت. For example, two students (f) is written as طالبتانِ orطالبتين depending on the necessary case.

A dual word is modified by a dual adjective. Thus, “two Egyptian (m) students” is طالبان مصريان “Two Egyptian (f) students” is طالبتان مصريتان. Isn’t this easy?

Now, please confidently proceed to Exercise A in the back, then come back here when finished (seriously, do it in that order)

After that, please proceed to the

Tricky Rule!

If a dual word is in an idaafa, or has a pronoun suffix attached, the “n” of the dual will disappear just as it does for masculine sound plurals. Look at the sentences below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The two university students are present in the library. | ١. طالبا الجامعة موجودان في المكتبة. |
| 2. I saw the two university students in the library. | ٢. شاهدت طالبي الجامعة في المكتبة. |
| 3. I saw his two students in the library. | ٣. شاهدت طالبيهِ في المكتبة |

In sentence 1 we have طالبا without the ن due to the idaafa. In sentence 2 طالبا becomes طالبي since it is now in the accusative case. In sentence 2 the word appears without the vowels. Thus it could be read as “my student” or “the students (of the university).” The knowledgeable reader will immediately rule out both of these erroneous and horrendous readings. The first reading makes no sense. The second reading is wrong because the plural of طالب is طلبة ) طلاب is also a frequently used plural of طالب).  
Context is what tells you the meaning and SO DOES THE GRAMMAR.

Now, rush over to Exercise B and show the world what you’ve learned; then (and only then) come back here.

REMEMBER:

As you learned before, possessives like “my book” “her friend” are actually idaafas. Therefore, this same rule will apply to those type of idaafas, as in the example below:

كتاباه – his two books

This is so important, we would like you go to Exercise C before continuing any further

Welcome back. We’re getting near the end.

Pronouns:

Arabic has a separate pronoun for each of the dual forms, with the exception of 1st person, so there is no dual form for “we two” or “You and I”. Otherwise, they work just like the regular pronouns:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Single | Dual | Plural |
| هو | هما | هم |
| أنت | أنتما | أنتم |
| أنا | نحن | نحن |
| هذا | هذان | --- |
| هذه | هاتان | --- |

Note the following examples:

1. أين محمد وسلمى؟ هما في المكتبة.
2. هل تعرف أحمد ولطيفة؟ نعم، أعرفهما.
3. هل أنتما سيذهبان إلى السينما؟

Verbs

By now, you have gotten used to adding ان to words to get the dual. Just follow this pattern to get the dual conjugations for verbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| يدرسان | هما |
| تدرسان | أنتما |
| تدرسان | هما (if both are feminine) |

ARBC 201 Dual \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

EXERCISE A:

Please put the underlined singular nouns into the *correct* dual form, asking yourself:

* what function is it in the sentence?
* does it have ة?:

1. الكلب الجديد جميل جداً
2. هل تعرف الطالبة الجديدة في صفنا؟
3. ذهبتُ إلى حفلة عيد الميلاد مع الأستاذ .
4. هناك جامعة كبيرة في مدينة ناشفل.
5. أحب المطعم المكسيكي في شارع رسلفل.
6. هناك ملابس جميلة في السوق في شارع لويفل.

EXERCISE B:

Please circle the dual nouns in the following sentences, realizing they could be in idaafas, in which case the ن will have dropped out. Then tell us why (i.e. what function)they have the vowel endings they do :

1. أستاذا اللغة العربية يعملان في نفس المكتب.
2. أنا أعرف طالبي التاريخ في صفنا.
3. احتفلنا في يومي العيد .
4. يعيش كلبا الأستاذ في هذا البيت.
5. قرأتُ كتابي تولستوي في صف الأدب.
6. عندي امتحانات في صفي الهندسة اليوم.

EXERCISE C:

In this exercise, you will tell us what the underlined compounds mean. As you read, remember the whole “n” dropping out thing, the two different cases, and ةchanging and you should be good:

1. شاهدتُ طالبيها في المكتبة.
2. كتاباه مملان جداً.
3. ذهبتُ إلى فيلم ألمو مع طفليَّ
4. تعمل صديقتانا في مطعم لنغهورن.
5. أحب سيارتيك كثيراً!
6. عملت في شركتيها لمدة 10 سنوات.