Human Plurals

Many, but not all, human plurals have predictable patterns:

* Most feminine words ending in ة take the plural suffix ات.

مصرية 🡨 مصريات

طبيبة 🡨 طبيبات

* Most masculine words of the nisba type (words ending in ي , such as عراقي or مصري) take the ending ون or ين. (Although this will be discussed later, the ون ending is used when the word is the subject of the sentence):

مصري 🡨 مصريون مصريين

سوري 🡨 سوريون سوريين

سعودي 🡨 سعوديون سعوديين

* Nouns refering to people that begin with مـ (most often professions, like مُدرّس , مُهندس) take the same endings as above:

مهندس 🡨 مهندسون مهندسين

موظف 🡨 موظفون موظفين

* Adjectives ending in ان such as غضبان or تعبان also take these endings:

تعبان 🡨 تعبانون تعبانين

Introduction to Cases

Arabic, like most languages, has a system of grammatical *cases*. This means that some words change form depending on their function in a sentence. Consider in English:

*I* saw *her*

*She* saw *me*

These are the same two people, of course, but we use a different word for each depending on who is the subject of the sentence (the doer) and who is the object (the receiver). This, by the way, is the difference between the words “who” and “whom”. The first is for a subject, the second for an object:

*Who* told you that?

*Whom* did you see there?

The Arabic case system is simpler than most (Russian has a real dandy if you want a complicated case system). For the most part, cases are not used in everyday speech or writing, and are reserved for the most formal of situations. However, a few instances of words differing for case do appear in everyday language (just like in English). We will address these as they come up.

One example is the ون and ين endings you’ve seen on plural words and on numbers. The ون is used for the subject of a sentence, and the ين for all other situations.

المصريون يتكلمون العربية

but

أحب المصريين.