ليسَ

لَيْسَ is an extremely important verb in Arabic. We know we don’t use a verb to say “am” “is” or “are.” But how do we negate these things? You cannot negate a sentence like أنا طالب with لا. This is a common beginner mistake and one an intermediate student would not be expected to make. لَيْسَ is used to negate an Arabic sentence that does not have a verb in it. This includes statements like عندي which, as you know, is not a verb.

هل هو الطالب؟ هو ليسَ الطالب.

هل عندك أخ؟ ليس عندي أخ.

هل لك كلب؟ ليس لي كلب.

The “she” form of لَيْسَ is لَيْسَتْ. Notice it has the same ending as every other past tense verb you have seen. Although لَيْسَ is always in the past, its meaning is “not.” (It basically comes from a contraction of a verb phrase meaning “did not become,” but now has the meaning of “is not” “are not” etc.)

هل هو الأستاذ؟ 🡨 لا، هو ليسَ الأستاذ.

هل هي الأستاذة؟ 🡨 لا، هي ليستْ الأستاذة.

لَسْتُ

The “I” version of ليسَ ends just like every other “I” verb. You will notice that the يـ has dropped out of the middle. Please note the pronunciation well. There is no such thing as “Laystu.” Listeners will be confused as to about whom you are talking. the “ay” sound remains only for he, she and they. The good news is that this pattern will hold for every verb with a long vowel in the middle.

هل أنتَ الأستاذ؟ لا، لستُ الأستاذ.

يا نيكول، هل أنتِ متزوّجة؟ لا، لستُ متزوجة.

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لستَ لستِ

The “you” form of ليسَ looks like every other “you” verb, and also rhymes with the pronoun:

أنتَ 🡨 لستَ أنتِ 🡨 لسـتِ

The full conjugation of ليس is below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Verb\* | Person |
| I am not | لَسْتُ | أنا |
| You are not | لَسْتَ | أنْتَ |
| You are not | لَسْتِ | أنْتِ |
| he (it) is not | لَيْسَ | هُوَ |
| she (it) is not | لَيْسَتْ | هِيَ |
| we are not | لَسْنا | نَحْنُ |

More advanced points:

ليس , like كانَ and a number of other verbs[[1]](#footnote-1) affects a sentence like so:

أنا طالب

لستُ طالباً

كنتُ طالباً

What has happened here? You will notice that the first sentence has no verb in it. In the second two sentences, there is now a verb. The subject of each sentence is “I”. The word طالب has become the object of the verb (if the verb is “not”, then what is the thing that I am not? That is now the object of the verb). As you may remember, an indefinite object takes a اً ending. Thus the object of ليس or كان has an اً ending, which does not affect the meaning. You can look this up in an Arabic grammar book where you will get a much more convoluted explanation that essentially means the same thing.

1. Some of the others we have seen are أصبح، مازال، صار all verbs that have to do with “being.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)