

Getting Started with Moroccan Arabic

Objective: By the end of the chapter, you will be able to:

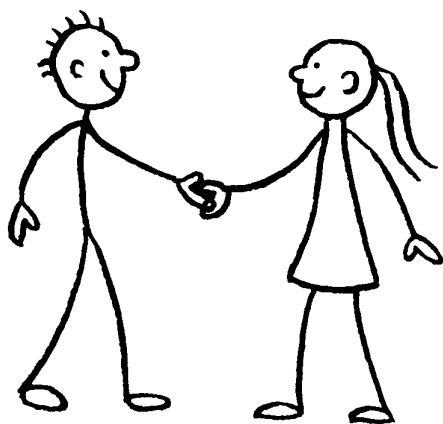
- greet people and introduce yourself
- use independent pronouns to make simple sentences
- use possessive pronouns to indicate possession
- distinguish between masculine and feminine nouns

Greetings

Cultural Points

Greetings and farewells (good byes) are two important aspects of Moroccan life. Greetings are not to be compared with the quick American “hi.” It takes time for two people to exchange different questions and answers which interest them about each other, their families, and life in general. Greetings change from one region to another, both in the questions posed and in the fashion of the greeting (i.e. shaking hands, kissing cheeks head or hands, or putting one’s hand over one’s heart after shaking hands).

If you greet a group of people, then the way you greet the first person is the way you should greet everyone in the group. Don’t be surprised if you are greeted by a friend but he does not introduce you to other people with whom he may be talking. Do not be surprised if you are in a group and you are not greeted as others are in the group (people may be shy to greet a stranger.) It is also not necessary to give an overly detailed response to a greeting—only the usual response is expected. For example, “How are you?” requires only a simple “Fine, thanks be to God.”



How do people greet each other in different cultures?

Greeting expressions and appropriate responses

A: Peace be upon you B: And peace be upon you (too)	s-salamu ʿalaykum wa ʿalaykum s-salam	السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ عَلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامُ
A: Good morning B: Good morning	ṣbah l-xir ṣbah l-xir	صباح الخير صباح الخير
A: Good afternoon / evening B: Good afternoon / evening	msa l-xir msa l-xir	مساء الخير مساء الخير

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name	smiya	سمية
What's your name?	šnu smitk?	شنو سميتك؟
my name...	smiti...	سميتي...
your name...	smitk...	سميتك...
his name...	smitu...	سميتو...
her name...	smitha...	سميتها...
Nice to meet you.	mtšrfin	متشرفين
How are you (masc.)?	kif dayr?	كيف داير؟
How are you (fem.)?	kif dayra?	كيف دايرة؟
Are you fine?	labas?	لا باس؟
Good, thanks be to God.	labas, l-hamdullah	لا باس الحمد لله
Good, thanks be to God.	bixir, l-hamdullah	بخير الحمد لله
Everything is fine.	kulši bixir	كلشي بخير
Good-bye	bslama	ب السلامة
Good night	layla saʿida	ليلة سعيدة

Greetings Dialogue

John: s-salamu ʿalaykum.	دجون: السلام عليكم
Mohamed: wa ʿalaykum s-salam.	محمد: و عليكم السلام
John: kif dayr?	دجون: كيف داير؟
Mohamed: labas, l-hamdullah. u nta?	محمد: لا باس الحمد لله. و انت؟
John: bixir, l-hamdullah.	دجون: بخير الحمد لله
Mohamed: šnu smitk?	محمد: شنو سميتك؟
John: smiti John. u nta?	دجون: سميتي دجون. و انت؟
Mohamed: smiti Mohamed.	محمد: سميتي محمد
John: mtšrfin.	دجون: متشرفين
Mohamed: mtšrfin.	محمد: متشرفين

Transcription Reminder – see page 1 for the full table with all transcription characters.

š: the /sh/ sound as in “she”

a: the ‘a’ in “father” or the ‘a’ in “mad”

x: the ‘ch’ in the German “Bach” or the

i: the ‘ee’ in “meet”

Exercise: Put this dialogue in the correct order.

Chris: šbaħ l-xir.	كريس: صباح الخير
Amy: mtšrfīn.	أيمي: متشرفين
Chris: kif dayra?	كريس: كيف دايرة؟
Amy: šnu smitk?	أيمي: شنو سميتك؟
Chris: labas, l-ħamdullah.	كريس: لا بأس الحمد لله
Amy: smiti Amy.	أيمي: سميتي أيمي
Chris: smiti Chris. u nti?	كريس: سميتي كريس. و نت؟
Amy: šbaħ l-xir.	أيمي: صباح الخير
Chris: mtšrfīn.	كريس: متشرفين
Amy: bixir, l-ħamdullah. u nta?	أيمي: بخير الحمد لله

Independent Pronouns

We call the following pronouns “independent” because they are not attached to other words, such as nouns, verbs, or prepositions (see “Possessive Pronouns,” next page, and “Object Pronouns,” page 60). The pronouns are often used in a number of different ways.

I	ana	أنا
you (masc. singular)	nta	نت
you (fem. singular)	nti	نت
he	huwa	هُوَ
she	hiya	هِيَ
we	ħna	حنا
you (plural)	ntuma	نتُّما
they	ħuma	هُما

When they are followed by a noun or an adjective, the verb “to be” is not necessary. It is implied already, and simple sentences can be made by using independent pronouns with a nouns or adjectives.

I am a teacher.

ana ustad.

أنا أستاذ.

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She is tired.

hiya عيانا.

هيَ عَيَّانَة.

Transcription Reminder – see page 1 for the full table with all transcription characters.

h: the normal English /h/ sound as in “hello.”

ħ: like the English “h,” except pronounce it deep in the throat as a loud rasp

Possessive Pronouns

In Darija, a suffix (ending) may be added to the end of words in order to express possession.

my	i / ya*	ي / يا
your (singular)	k	ك
his	u / h*	و / ه
her	ha	ها
our	na	نا
your (plural)	kum	كُم
their	hum	هُم

* For the “my” and “his” forms, the first ending is used for words ending in consonants, while the second is used with words ending in vowels. For example, **smit_i** (my name), but **xuya** (my brother).

Example of possessive pronouns with the noun “book.”

book	ktab	كتاب
my book	ktabi	كتابي
your (sing.) book	ktabk	كتابك
his book	ktabu	كتابو
her book	ktabha	كتابها
our book	ktabna	كتابنا
your (plur.) book	ktabkum	كتابكُم
their book	ktabhum	كتابهُم

Most feminine nouns in Arabic have an “a” sound at the end of the word. In Arabic script, this “a” is actually a **silent “t”** that is only pronounced on certain occasions. For all feminine words ending in this silent “t” (ة), we drop the sound “a” and substitute it with “t” before adding a possessive pronoun. For example, the feminine noun **magana** (a watch).

watch	magana	مَغانة
my watch	magant_i	مَغانتي
your (sing.) watch	magant_k	مَغانتك
his watch	magant_u	مَغانتو
her watch	magant_ha	مَغانتها
our watch	magant_na	مَغانتنا
your (plur.) watch	magant_kum	مَغانتكم
their watch	magant_hum	مَغانتُهُم

Exercise: Use the following words with the appropriate possessive pronoun.

- dar (house)
 - blaṣa (place)
 - ktab (book)
 - wɪrqa (sheet of paper, ticket)
1. your (plur.) house
 2. my place
 3. his book
 4. our place
 5. your (sing.) ticket
 6. their place
 7. her house
 8. his ticket
 9. your (sing.) book
 10. their house

Masculine and Feminine Nouns

In Arabic, all nouns are either masculine or feminine. In general, nouns ending in “a” (the silent “t” (ة) in Arabic script) are feminine. For example:

name	smiya	سمية
city	mdina	مدينة
chicken (a single one)	djaja	دجاجة
television	tlfaza	تلفزة

The feminine is formed from the masculine (for nouns indicating professions or participles) by adding “a” (the silent “t” (ة) in Arabic script) to the end of the word. For example:

male teacher	ustad	أستاذ
female teacher	ustada	أستاذة
working (masc. participle)	xddam	خدّام
working (fem. participle)	xddama	خدّامة

Some words without “a” (the silent “t” (ة) in Arabic script) are nonetheless feminine. First, words and proper names which are by their nature feminine:

mother	om	أم
Amal (girl's name)	amal	أمل

Second, most (though not all) parts of the body that come in pairs are feminine:

an eye	ein	عين
a hand	yɔ	يد
a foot	rjɔl	رجل
an ear	udn	ودن

Third, a small number of nouns which do not fall into any category and yet are feminine:

the house	ḍ-ḍar	الدار
the sun	š-šms	الشمس

Transcription Reminder – see page 1 for the full table with all transcription characters.

j : the /zh/ sound, like the 's' in the word "pleasure."

Remember that if two characters in a row are the same, a "shedda" is used, and we pronounce