

## \* the Arabic alphabet

The Arabic alphabet has 28 characters. A character has different forms depending on whether it's used by itself or comes at the beginning, middle or end of a word.

ISOLATED	INITIAL	MIDDLE	FINAL	NAME	SHOWN AS
ا	أ	آ	آ	alif	a, aa, ae
ب	ب	ب	ب	ba'	b
ت	ت	ت	ت	ta	t
ث	ث	ث	ث	thae	th, t
ج	ج	ج	ج	geem or jeem	g, j
ح	ح	ح	ح	haa	H
خ	خ	خ	خ	khaa'	kh
د	د	د	د	dael	d
ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	zael	z,d
ر	ر	ر	ر	re	r
ز	ز	ز	ز	zayn	z,d
س	س	س	س	seen	s
ش	ش	ش	ش	sheen	sh
ص	ص	ص	ص	SaaD	S
ض	ض	ض	ض	DaaD	D
ط	ط	ط	ط	Ta	T
ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	Zaa	z,d
ع	ع	ع	ع	ʿayn	a
غ	غ	غ	غ	ghayn	gh
ف	ف	ف	ف	fa'	f
ق	ق	ق	ق	qaaf	q
ك	ك	ك	ك	kaf	kh

ل	ل	ل	ل	laem	l
م	م	م	م	meem	m
ن	ن	ن	ن	noon	n
ه	ه	ه	ه	ha'	h
و	و	و	و	waaw	w
ي	ي	ي	ي	ya'	y

The letter **ج** (*geem*) is pronounced as a hard **g** (as in 'get') in Egypt, while in most other countries it is soft, more like an English *j*.

In the Arabic script there are also three vowel signs: **َ** (a), **ُ** (u), and **ِ** (i). These are written either above or below the letter to which they belong (although they are often left out), and they change the sound of that letter accordingly.

**عَرَب** <sup>a</sup>arab (Arab)      **عَرَبِي** <sup>a</sup>arabi (Arabic)  
**صَبُون** *Saboon* (soap)      **بِنْت** *bint* (girl)

This is why you will notice that in this book sometimes only one written option is given in the Arabic for a word that has a masculine/feminine version in the imitated pronunciation.

Arabic text is written horizontally, from right to left. There are no capital letters. Punctuation is the same as in English, but written back to front, e.g. ؟ instead of ?.

## \* 'sun' and 'moon' letters

Of the 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet 14 letters are 'sun' letters, the other 14 are 'moon' letters. It is important to know which are which when using the definite article *il-*.