

Arabic Language Learning Guide

Introduction

Congratulations on your interest in a federal career that uses your Arabic skills! Arabic is a critically important language that holds strategic political and economic value for the United States. Arabic is the official language of over 20 countries and is spoken by nearly 300 million people. It is also one of the official languages of the United Nations and the World Bank. Arabic is in high demand as it can give you greater access to the fields of business, diplomacy, public policy, and more.

As you prepare for the workforce, you may have language-specific questions about the opportunities available to you. This guide will present an overview of language learning opportunities, including scholarships, summer learning programs, and university classes, and guidance for further developing your Arabic language skills through independent study to help you prepare to use these skills in a federal job. The links here reflect high-quality government and university resources, which you may use as a starting point for doing your own research to find the resources that work best for you.

As you continue to learn the language, you may find it helpful to consult the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (in [English](#) or [Arabic](#)) to track your progress. You may also want to refer to the government's [Arabic Roadmap](#) to find a list of resources grouped by level.

Language Learning Opportunities

Scholarships

There are many scholarships available for Arabic study, including scholarships for study abroad. You can even begin in high school with the [National Security Language Initiative for Youth](#) program, which awards scholarships to high school students to participate in summer and academic year immersion programs. Undergraduate and graduate students can apply for the [Boren Awards](#) to help fund study abroad with an intensive language study component. If you are specifically interested in summer language study abroad, consider the [Critical Language Scholarship Program](#). College seniors, graduate students, and young professionals can apply for [Fulbright U.S. Student Program](#) grants to pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach English abroad in countries where Arabic is spoken. In addition to these government-sponsored scholarships, there are many private and school-specific scholarships, so be sure to search for other funding opportunities.

Pell Grant recipients can apply for the [Gilman Scholarship](#) to fund study or internships abroad, and you can enhance this scholarship with a [Critical Need Language Award](#) for Arabic. ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) students can apply to [Project GO](#) to enhance your language and intercultural communications skills. Your school may also have specific scholarships for language or area studies, so it may be helpful to talk to professors or financial aid officers to see what opportunities are available.

Additional Opportunities

Approximately 850 colleges and universities in the United States offered Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) classes as of [2016](#), with hundreds more offering other varieties. Even if your school doesn't offer classes, you can explore [summer learning opportunities](#) and the individual learning resources listed in this guide. If you are in high school through sophomore year of college, you might want to participate in a [STARTALK](#) program.

If you are still thinking about where to apply to college, you may want to consider a school with an [Arabic Flagship program](#). The Flagship programs offer students from various majors the opportunity to pursue advanced level language study, including an overseas study and internship experience, culminating in certification as a Flagship Certified Professional. Other colleges offer specific tracks for heritage learners, so be sure to look for these programs, too.

Guidance for Developing Your Skills

As a heritage speaker, you may want to focus on practicing your reading and writing skills to help your literacy skills match your speaking and listening skills. You may also want to study Arabic vocabulary for a specialized field, such as your major, to help you apply your language skills more broadly. Arabic has a rich writing system that you can begin to learn through [this link](#) from the Language Acquisition Resource Center at San Diego State University. There are several regional dialects of Arabic, some of which may not be mutually intelligible with speakers of a different variety. If you speak a dialect, it is helpful to also learn MSA as it is used for reading and writing in formal and academic settings.

The internet is full of resources that can help you practice Arabic. San Diego State University's [Language Acquisition Resource Center](#) has a page dedicated to [online Arabic materials](#), including [lessons through dialogue](#), an [interactive verb form chart](#), and even [dialect-specific materials for Iraqi Arabic](#). Brigham Young University's [Arabic Flagship Center](#) has a series of "[Can Do Statements](#)" to help you gauge your level of proficiency and give you an idea of what you should study next. The [National Foreign Language Center](#) at the University of Maryland offers a [portal](#) with higher level reading and listening materials, which you can select based on their level on the ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable) scale, the language proficiency scale used by the U.S. government, as well as [Lectia](#), a free language learning app.

Several Language Resource Centers (federally funded programs at universities that provide language-learning research and resources) also offer materials for practicing Arabic. If you would like to improve your reading and writing skills, the [National Heritage Language Resource Center](#) at the University of California, Los Angeles has [Arabic workbooks](#) for heritage learners. To improve your listening comprehension skills, you can visit [Aswaat Arabiyya](#), a website developed by the [Center for Open Educational Resources & Language Learning](#) at the University of Texas at Austin. If you prefer to practice listening by watching videos, the [Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy](#) at the University of Arizona has a [playlist](#) of a native Arabic speaker giving short talks on simple topics.

Many other universities provide lists of resources for practicing your Arabic skills. A small sample includes resources from the [University of Chicago](#), [Columbia University](#), and the [University of Maryland](#). Some of these websites include links for dictionaries and study tools, as well as Arabic media such as news sources. You may enjoy consuming Arabic-language entertainment as well, such as music, movies, or novels.