

## Nahw - Let us count in Arabic - and get a headache!

Remember your kindergarten class and learning to count: One, Two, Three. Easy, wasn't it? Not the case in Arabic counting system . Before I even try to begin explaining the numbers and counting system in Arabic I would like to come up with a short disclaimer: if you get a headache after reading this post please do not leave inflammatory messages on my blog. I am but a poor student trying to learn counting in Arabic .

Well, jokes aside, the Numbers in Arabic systems have complex rules regarding their usage and can be learned only if one memorizes these rules. Most of the stuff for this post will come from Alan Jones' book [Arabic Through the Quran](#) with notes from the [Toronto Shariah Program](#) class, of course. I will try to make it as easy as possible, Insha Allah, to learn the numbering system in the Arabic Language.

In English we say *I saw three boys* or *I saw three girls*. Notice how *three* remains the same in both the structures. In Arabic, however, the gender is *also* associated with numbers (with some exceptions), thus

we say *ثَلَاثَةُ أَيَّامٍ* (*Three days*) and *تِسْعُ آيَاتٍ* (*Seven verses*) where we use the masculine form

of the number in the first example and the feminine in the second. To make things more complicated,

we also have to consider which grammatical state each part of the number goes in.

Let us try to make some sense out of this. We start our discussion by listing the counting in Arabic.

Number	with Masculine Noun	with Feminine Noun
One	أَحَدٌ	إِحْدَى
Two	اِثْنَانِ	اِثْنَتَانِ
Three	ثَلَاثَةٌ	ثَلَاثٌ
Four	أَرْبَعَةٌ	أَرْبَعٌ
Five	خَمْسَةٌ	خَمْسٌ
Six	سِتَّةٌ	سِتٌّ

Seven	سَبْعَةٌ	سَبْعٌ
Eight	ثَمَانِيَةٌ	ثَمَانٌ
Nine	تِسْعَةٌ	تِسْعٌ
Ten	عَشْرَةٌ	عَشْرٌ
Eleven	أَحَدَ عَشَرَ	إِحْدَى عَشْرَةَ
Twelve	اثْنَا عَشَرَ	اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ
Thirteen	ثَلَاثَةَ عَشَرَ	ثَلَاثَ عَشْرَةَ

Since 1 and 2 are straightforward to handle we start at number 3 and divide the numbers in ranges for easier handling

**3-10** : From 3 until 10 the gender of the number will be opposite to what is being counted (i.e. the noun). Also, the noun being counted will be in the state of جر. Examples: سَبْعُ سَمَوَاتٍ (seven heavens) or أَرْبَعَةُ شُهَدَاءَ (four witnesses)

**11** : The noun and number will both match in gender and are مَبْنِي on فَتْحَة. For example: إِحْدَى إِحْدَى (eleven cities) or أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا (eleven stars)

**12** : For 12 the unit part is مُعْرَبٌ but the ten is not ; it is مَبْنِي on فَتْحَة and both numerals agree in gender with the noun, thus: اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا (twelve months) or اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا (twelve springs) and اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ مَدِينَةً (twelve cities) and اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ نَقِيْبًا (twelve chiefs) and اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ مَدِينَةً (twelve cities). Note that the اثْنَتَا / اثْنَا form is the رَفْع form whereas the اثْنَتَا / اثْنَتَا form is the جَر form. These 4 forms occur only for the number 12.

**13-19** : For this range the unit part goes into the opposite gender to that of the noun whereas the ten

part matches it. Both the parts are on فَتْحَة مَبْنِي . For Example: ثَلَاثَةَ عَشَرَ رَجُلًا (*thirteen men*) or ثَلَاثَ عَشْرَةَ امْرَأَةً (*thirteen women*)

Note the use of عَشَرَ for masculine and عَشْرَةَ for feminine nouns.

**20-90** : These do not have a gender attached to them and follow the إعراب rule for the [Sound Masculine](#)

[Plural](#). For example: ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً (*eighty lashes*) or أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً (*forty years*) or ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا (*thirty months*)

**100, 200 / 1000, 2000 etc**: The noun in this case is singular مَجْرُور and there is no gender associated

with the noun. For example: مِائَةَ عَامٍ (*one hundred years*) or أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (*one thousand years*).

I hope this introduction to Arabic numbers will make it easier for beginners to learn this complex topic, Insha Allah. So read this post and let me know your feedback!