

## Sarf - ابواب الافعال - Introduction to Verb Groupings

Up until now we have been dealing with just one type of the base verb i.e. **فَعَلَ** . However, this is not the only way a base verb can occur in Arabic. In fact, the **ماضى** verb (and consequently the **مُضارع** verb) can occur in several different *patterns* depending upon the vowelling and number of letters in the base verb. In this post, I will, Insha Allah, explain about different patterns of Arabic verbs along with some of their examples.

To start with, we may be tempted to assume that any two verbs which have the same voice, same tense, and the same conjugation number will look alike and will rhyme with one another. However, this is not the case as can be seen by looking at the following 3 examples:

1. **نَصَرَ**
2. **سَمِعَ**
3. **دَهَرَجَ**

The first verb, **نَصَرَ** (to help), rhymes with **فَعَلَ** and has the same number of letters as **فَعَلَ** .

The second verb, **سَمِعَ** (to hear), although having the same number of letters as **فَعَلَ** , does *not*

rhyme with it due to a *kasra* on the middle letter. Finally, the last verb, **دَهَرَجَ** (to roll), does not

rhyme with **فَعَلَ** , and also has 4 letters in it, rather than 3. As a rule of thumb, differences in Arabic verbs can occur due to one of 6 reasons:

- 3 of these reasons relate to number of letters in the base verb and its vowel pattern
- 3 of these reasons relate to irregularities. These have nothing to do with number of base letters or the vowel pattern of the verb. Rather, these differences in verbs are introduced by the presence of certain letters e.g. **و , ي , ء**

In this post I will deal with the first 3 rules which can be stated into the following expanded categories:

1. Difference in number of base letters of a verb
2. Difference in the way the verb is enhanced
3. Difference in the **ع** position vowel of a verb

The minimum number of letters in a base verb is 3 and the maximum is 4. Each one of these two sets of verbs may comprise of only base letters (i.e. without any enhancement) or they may have addition of non-base, or extra, letters (i.e. enhanced), which provides us with 4 distinct verb groupings:

1. Verbs with 3 base letters which are not enhanced, called **ثُلَاثِي مُجَرَّد** e.g. **نَصَرَ**
2. Verbs with 3 base letters which are enhanced, called **ثُلَاثِي مُزِيد فِيهِ** e.g. **اَكْرَمَ**
3. Verbs with 4 base letters which are not enhanced, called **رُبَاعِي مُجَرَّد** e.g. **دَهَرَجَ**
4. Verbs with 4 base letters which are enhanced, called **رُبَاعِي مُزِيد فِيهِ** e.g. **اِطْمَعَنَّ**

On top of this, verbs can differ in the way the vowel appears on the **ع** position. Using the **ثُلَاثِي مُجَرَّد**

form of **مَاضِي** and switching the vowel on the **ع** position, we get 3 distinct patterns:

1. **فَعَلَ**
2. **فَعِلَ**

### 3. فَعُلَّ

For each of these patterns of a مُجرَّد ثلاثي verb, there will exist 3 corresponding مُضارع patterns with their own vowelling patterns, giving us 9 patterns in total which are listed in the table below:

#	مُضارع	ماضى
1	يَفْعَلُ	فَعَلَ
2	يَفْعِلُ	فَعَلَ
3	يَفْعُلُ	فَعَلَ
4	يَفْعَلُ	فَعِلَ
5	يَفْعِلُ	فَعِلَ
6	يَفْعُلُ	فَعِلَ
7	يَفْعَلُ	فَعُلَ
8	يَفْعِلُ	فَعُلَ
9	يَفْعُلُ	فَعُلَ

The patterns 6, 7, and 8 *do not* exist in the Arabic Language, which means that you will never find a

مُجرَّد ثلاثي verb based on this pattern of vowelling. As for the remaining 6, each pattern is called a

باب (*door*) and can be defined as an *etymological grouping which arises due to a difference in number*

*of letters or the ع position vowelling in both ماضى and مُضارع patterns of a verb.* Every مُجرَّد ثلاثي

verb in Arabic will follow *exactly one* of these patterns. To ease memorization of these ابواب the

scholars of صرف have picked up the most widely used example from each of them and have named the

باب after it. These are listed in the following table in their order of popularity:

#	مُضَارِع	ماضى
1	يَنْصُرُ	نَصَرَ
2	يَضْرِبُ	ضَرَبَ
3	يَسْمَعُ	سَمِعَ
4	يَفْتَحُ	فَتَحَ
5	يُكْرِمُ	كَرَّمَ
6	يَحْسِبُ	حَسَبَ

I post here another way of remembering these ابواب , courtesy of [IANT](#)



The ثلاثي مزيد فيه ابواب :

Enhancement to verbs can be done in various ways: duplication of the ع position e.g. < - عَلمَ

عَلمَ ( to know -> to teach), or adding a hamzah, called همزة الوصل (or the enabling hamza, which is

added to ease pronunciation), at the front of the verb. This can be noticed with the ثلاثي مزيد فيه which

has 14 ابواب, out of which 5 do not have the enabling hamzah in front of them and all of these 5 are

popular. The rest of the 9 have the enabling hamza in front of them and only 3 are popular from among

theses nine. The 5 ابواب of ثلاثي مزيد فيه without the همزة الوصل are given in the table below:

#	مُضَارِع	ماضى
1	يُكْرِمُ	أَكْرَمَ
2	يُصَرِّفُ	صَرَّفَ

3	يُقَامِلُ	قَامَلَ
4	يَتَقَابَلُ	تَقَابَلَ
5	يَتَقَابِلُ	تَقَابَلُ

I hope that this very brief introduction to ابواب الافعال will be a good starting point for further learning of

this vast field of صرف . Insha Allah, I will write more about this topic once we go through it in the

course.