

What speech is, and its three kinds

Bāb al-Kalām — the opening chapter. Follow this sheet while the lesson plays; everything on it is on the page at alyphacademy.org.

THE TEXT

الْكَلَامُ: هُوَ اللَّفْظُ الْمُرَكَّبُ الْمُفِيدُ بِالْوَضْعِ.
وَأَقْسَامُهُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: اِسْمٌ، وَفِعْلٌ، وَحَرْفٌ جَاءَ لِمَعْنَى.
فَالِإِسْمُ يُعْرَفُ بِالْخَفْضِ، وَالتَّنْوِينِ، وَدُخُولِ الْأَلِفِ وَاللَّامِ،
وَحُرُوفِ الْخَفْضِ. وَالْفِعْلُ يُعْرَفُ بِقَدْ، وَالسَّيْنِ، وَسَوْفَ،
وَتَاءِ التَّانِيثِ السَّاكِنَةِ. وَالْحَرْفُ: مَا لَا يَصْلَحُ مَعَهُ
دَلِيلُ الْإِسْمِ وَلَا دَلِيلُ الْفِعْلِ.

Al-kalāmu huwa l-lafzu l-murakkabu l-mufidu bi-l-waḍ'. Wa-aqsāmuḥu thalāthatun: ismun, wa-fi'lun, wa-ḥarfun jā'a li-ma'nā. Fa-l-ismu yu'rafu bi-l-khafḍi, wa-t-tanwīni, wa-dukhūli l-alifi wa-l-lāmi, wa-ḥurūfi l-khafḍ.

Speech is the utterance that is composed, that conveys a complete sense, and that is so by convention. Its divisions are three: a **noun**, a **verb**, and a **particle** that has come for a meaning.

FOUR CONDITIONS — AND WHAT EACH ONE EXCLUDES

Condition		It rules out
الْفِظ	lafz — an utterance	Writing and gesture. Grammar here describes sound.
الْمُرَكَّب	murakkab — composed	The single word. <i>Zayd</i> on its own is not <i>kalām</i> .
الْمُفِيد	mufid — conveying sense	"If <i>Zayd</i> stood..." — composed, but the listener is still waiting.
بِالْوَضْع	bi-l-waḍ' — by convention	Disputed. Either speech in another language, or the words of a sleeper. Left open.

THREE KINDS OF WORD — NOT EIGHT

Arabic has no separate category for adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, demonstratives or relatives. They are all **ism**.

Kind		How you recognise it
إِسْم	ism — noun	Any one of four signs: <i>khaḍ</i> · <i>tanwīn</i> · the <i>alif-lām</i> · a particle of <i>khaḍ</i> (<i>min</i> , <i>ilā</i> , <i>'an</i> , <i>'alā</i> , <i>fī</i> , <i>rubba</i> , <i>bā'</i> , <i>kāf</i> , <i>lām</i>)
فِعْل	fi'l — verb	<i>qad</i> · the <i>sīn</i> · <i>sawfa</i> · the quiescent <i>tā'</i> of the feminine
حَرْف	ḥarf — particle	Neither test works. It is defined by failing both — the residual category.

The signs are tests, not requirements. A noun need carry none of them; any one settles it. And *tanwīn* and *alif-lām* can never appear on the same word — so no noun ever shows the whole list.

WORKED EXAMPLE — HADITH 1

Every diagnostic in this chapter appears in the first five words of the first hadith on the site.

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

Word	It is	Because
إِنَّمَا	ḥarf	No alif-lām; <i>qad</i> cannot precede it. Neither test works.
الْأَعْمَالُ	ism	It carries the alif-lām — sign three. You did not need to know what it meant.
بِ	ḥarf	The bā' — named in the matn's own list of the particles of <i>khafḍ</i> .
النِّيَّاتِ	ism	Two signs at once: the alif-lām, and <i>khafḍ</i> (the kasra) because the bā' put it there.

NOW YOU — THE REST OF HADITH 1

Write **ism**, **fi'l** or **ḥarf**, then name the sign that told you. Not what it means — what it *is*.

وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

Word	It is	The sign that told you
وَ		
إِنَّمَا		
لِكُلِّ		
امْرِئٍ		
مَا نَوَى		

One of the four is a verb. The test for a verb is lesson 2 — but you can already find it by elimination.

Lesson by Muhammad Ahmad · **From** Al-Ājurrūmiyya, Bāb al-Kalām · Translation and grammatical analysis: Alyph Academy. Not yet checked by a second scholar. · The matn is public domain; this sheet is our own work and free to copy. Found an error? corrections@alyphacademy.org