

Basic Egyptian Dialect

المصري ببساطة

Speak with confidence.
Connect through everyday life.



Dr. Wagih Elgohary

Practical phrases · Real-life dialogues
Culture notes · Exercises & answers

Start with one conversation

Egyptian Arabic opens the door to everyday exchanges: greeting a neighbor, ordering tea, asking a driver to stop, or thanking a host. You do not need perfect grammar to begin. You do need to listen, be clear, and give the other person time to respond.

This beginner guide focuses on widely used urban Egyptian expressions, especially those heard in Cairo. Regional speech, spelling, age, and personal style vary. Modern Standard Arabic remains useful for formal writing and news.

How to use this book

1. Read the Arabic and the plain pronunciation guide.
2. Say the phrase slowly, then at a natural pace.
3. Practice the short exchange with a partner.
4. Change one detail: a name, place, drink, or destination.
5. Try the exercises and compare your answers.

The pronunciation spellings are learning aids, not a formal transcription system. Learn the sounds from a proficient speaker whenever possible.

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Your route through the book

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Hear the sounds first

Read the pronunciation guide as an approximation. The same expression may be spelled in several ways in English.

Guide	Listen for
aa / ee / oo	Long vowels, as in salaam, feen, and fool.
sh	The sound in English “shop”: shukran.
kh	A rough breath from the back of the mouth, as in khalas.
gh	A voiced sound from the back of the mouth, as in ghaly.
‘	The Arabic ع; there is no exact English equivalent.
’	A brief stop in the voice, like the break in “uh-oh.”
g	A hard g, as in “go”; ج often sounds this way in Cairo.

The letter ق is often heard as a short voice stop in Cairo, but not in every word or in every region. Do not apply one pronunciation rule mechanically.

For readability, many phrases below use familiar spellings such as ana, enta, and shukran. Listen to the speaker rather than treating English letters as exact sounds.

Greetings

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
السلام عليكم as-salaamu ‘aleekum	Peace be upon you; a common greeting.
وعليكم السلام wa ‘aleekum is-salaam	The customary response.
صباح الخير sabaah il-kheer	Good morning.
صباح النور sabaah in-noor	A common response to good morning.
مساء الخير masa’ il-kheer	Good evening.
إزيك؟ izzayyak? / izzayyik?	How are you? To a man / to a woman.
الحمد لله، كويس / كويسة il-hamdu lillaah, kuwayyis / kuwayyisa	Thank God, I am well. Male / female speaker.

A greeting may lead to a little conversation before business. Match the other person's warmth without assuming everyone wants the same level of familiarity.

Introducing yourself

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
أنا اسمي علي. ana ismi Ali.	My name is Ali.
اسمك إيه؟ ismak eeh? / ismik eeh?	What is your name? To a man / woman.
أنا من أمريكا. ana min Amreeka.	I am from America.
أنا بتعلم عربي. ana bat'allim 'arabi.	I am learning Arabic.
أنا بتكلم عربي شوية. ana batkallim 'arabi shuwayya.	I speak a little Arabic.
إنت مينين؟ / إنت مينين؟ enta mineen? / enti mineen?	Where are you from? To a man / woman.
أهلاً وسهلاً. ahlan wa sahlan.	Welcome.

Change the name and country to introduce yourself. Use your real identity; you do not need an Arabic name to participate.

“تشرافنا” (tsharrafna) is a useful way to say “Pleased to meet you.”

Politeness & repair

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
من فضلك min fadlak / min fadlik	Please. To a man / woman.
لو سمحت law samaht / law samahti	Excuse me / please. To a man / woman.
شكراً shukran	Thank you.
العفو il-'afw	You are welcome.
معلىش ma'lesh	Sorry / never mind; the meaning depends on context.
مش فاهم / مش فاهمة mish faahim / mish faahma	I do not understand. Male / female speaker.
ممکن تقولها تاني بالراحة؟ mumkin ti'oolha taani bir-raaha?	Could you say it again slowly?

A repair phrase is a conversation tool. Asking someone to repeat is usually more useful than pretending you understood.

Numbers & prices

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
واحد · اثنين · ثلاثة waahid · itneen · talaata	1 · 2 · 3
أربعة · خمسة · ستة arba'a · khamisa · sitta	4 · 5 · 6
سبعة · ثمانية · تسعة sab'a · tamaanya · tis'a	7 · 8 · 9
عشرة · عشرين · ثلاثين 'ashara · 'ishreen · talaateen	10 · 20 · 30
خمسين · مئة khamseen · miyya	50 · 100
بكام؟ bikaam?	How much?
الحساب كام؟ il-hisaab kaam?	How much is the bill?

Prices in this book are practice values, not travel quotations. Confirm the amount and currency before paying. Numbers change form in some grammatical contexts; learn a price as a complete phrase.

Try reading ١٠ , ٩ , ٨ , ٧ , ٦ , ٥ , ٤ , ٣ , ٢ , ١ alongside 1-10.

Useful questions

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
eeh?	إيه؟ What?
meen?	مين؟ Who?
feen?	فين؟ Where?
imta?	إمتى؟ When?
leeh?	ليه؟ Why?
izzay?	إزاي؟ How?
il-hammaam feen?	الحمام فين؟ Where is the bathroom?
feeh wi-fi?	فيه واي فاي؟ Is there Wi-Fi?

Build a question by adding a familiar noun: الفندق فين؟ (il-fundu' feen?) means "Where is the hotel?"

Use a greeting or "لو سمحت" before a direct question when approaching someone.

At a café

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
عايز شاي، من فضلك. 'aayiz shaay, min fadlak.	I would like tea, please. Male speaker.
عايزة قهوة، من فضلك. 'aayza 'ahwa, min fadlak.	I would like coffee, please. Female speaker.
من غير سكر. min gheer sukkar.	Without sugar.
سكر قليل. sukkar 'aleel.	A little sugar.
ممکن مية؟ mumkin mayya?	Could I have some water?
الحساب، لو سمحت. il-hisaab, law samaht.	The bill, please.

Try the exchange

أ: شاي ولا قهوة؟

ب: شاي من غير سكر، شكراً.

A: Tea or coffee?

B: Tea without sugar, thank you.

Specify how you want your drink. Different cafés and households prepare tea and coffee differently.

Ordering food

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
ممکن أشوف المنيو؟ mumkin ashooof il-menu?	May I see the menu?
عايز طبق كشري. ‘aayiz taba’ koshari.	I would like a plate of koshary. Male speaker.
عايزة فول وطعمية. ‘aayza fool wi ta‘miyya.	I would like ful and falafel. Female speaker.
من غير شطة، من فضلك. min gheer shatta, min fadlak.	Without chili, please.
الأكل ده فيه إيه؟ il-akl da feeh eeh?	What is in this food?
عندي حساسية من المكسرات. ‘andi hasaaseyya min il-mukassaraat.	I have a nut allergy.
شكراً، الأكل حلو. shukran, il-akl hilw.	Thank you, the food is good.

For an allergy or dietary restriction, be specific and confirm that the staff understands. A short phrase alone cannot establish that a dish is safe for you.

At the market

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
ده بكام؟ da bikaam?	How much is this? Masculine noun.
دي بكام؟ di bikaam?	How much is this? Feminine noun.
عندك مقاس أكبر؟ ‘andak ma’aas akbar?	Do you have a larger size? To a man.
عندك لون تاني؟ ‘andak loon taani?	Do you have another color?
ممکن أشوف ده؟ mumkin ashooof da?	May I see this?
غالي شوية. ghali shuwayya.	It is a little expensive.
شكراً، هفكر. shukran, hafakkar.	Thank you, I will think about it.

Bargaining depends on the setting. A market stall and a supermarket do not necessarily follow the same practice. Ask politely and accept a clear refusal.

Practice choosing one item, asking its price, and either buying it or declining respectfully.

Taking a taxi

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
لو سمحت، ميدان التحرير. law samaht, midaan it-tahreer.	Tahrir Square, please.
المشوار بكام؟ il-mishwaar bikaam?	How much is the trip?
ممکن تشغل العدّاد؟ mumkin tishaghghal il-‘addaad?	Could you turn on the meter?
ممکن نقف هنا؟ mumkin ni’af hina?	Could we stop here?
على اليمين، لو سمحت. ‘ala il-yimeen, law samaht.	On the right, please.
استنى دقيقة، من فضلك. istanna di’ee’a, min fadlak.	Wait one minute, please. To a man.

Confirm the destination, payment method, and fare arrangement before the ride. This guide does not quote fares or promise that a particular service is available.

Role-play: one partner names a destination; the other asks where to stop. Then switch roles.

Asking directions

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
المتحف فين؟ il-mathaf feen?	Where is the museum?
امشي على طول. imshi 'ala tool.	Go straight ahead.
يمين / شمال yimeen / shimaal	Right / left.
قريب / بعيد 'ureyyib / bi'eed	Near / far.
قدام / ورا 'uddaam / wara	In front of / behind.
جنب الفندق. ganb il-fundu'.	Next to the hotel.
ممکن توريني على الخريطة؟ mumkin twarreeni 'ala il-khareeta?	Could you show me on the map?

Directions may use landmarks rather than street names. Repeat the instruction and check the map before walking.

Practice: Give directions from a fictional hotel to a café: straight ahead, right, then next to the museum.

At the hotel

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
عندي حجز باسم علي. 'andi hagz b-ism Ali.	I have a reservation under the name Ali.
ممکن المفتاح؟ mumkin il-miftaah?	May I have the key?
الفطار الساعة كام؟ il-fitaar is-saa'a kaam?	What time is breakfast?
الأسانسير فين؟ il-asaanseer feen?	Where is the elevator?
التكييف مش شغال. it-takyeef mish shaghghaal.	The air conditioning is not working.
ممکن فوطة زيادة؟ mumkin foota ziyaada?	Could I have an extra towel?
ممکن تساعدني؟ mumkin tisaa'idni?	Could you help me?

State the problem first, then make a request. Keep a copy of your reservation and address available to show staff.

English loanwords are common in urban speech. You may hear alternatives for "elevator," "menu," and other everyday objects.

Everyday words

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
aah / la'	آه / لأ Yes / no.
tamaam	تمام Fine / all set / complete.
maashi	ماشي Okay / agreed; also “walking” in other contexts.
khalaas	خلاص Enough / finished / that settles it.
yalla	يلا Let us go / come on.
dilwa'ti / ba'deen	دلوقتي / بعدين Now / later.
in-naharda / bukra	النهارده / بكرة Today / tomorrow.
shuwayya / kiteer	شوية / كتير A little / a lot.

Context changes meaning. “ماشي” can accept a plan; “خلاص” can end a task or signal that no more is needed. Tone matters.

Grammar in small steps

“I am” is often understood

أنا طالب. / أنا طالبة.

ana taalib / ana taalba. — I am a student. Male / female speaker.

Gender changes some everyday forms

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
إنت / إنتِ enta / enti	You: a man / a woman.
عايز / عايزة ‘aayiz / ‘aayza	Want / would like: male / female speaker.
كويس / كويسة kuwayyis / kuwayyisa	Well / good: masculine / feminine.
ده / دي da / di	This: masculine / feminine.

A simple negative

أنا مش جاهز. / أنا مش جاهزة.

ana mish gaahiz / ana mish gaahza. — I am not ready.

“مش” works in many noun and adjective statements. Verb negation often uses a different pattern, such as ما...ش. Learn those forms gradually rather than adding “مش” to every verb.

Requests & permission

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
ممکن أقعد هنا؟ mumkin a'od hina?	May I sit here?
ممکن أصوّر؟ mumkin asawwar?	May I take a photo?
ممکن أفتح الشباك؟ mumkin aftah ish-shibbaak?	May I open the window?
ممکن أستخدم التليفون؟ mumkin astakhdim it-tilifoon?	May I use the phone?
اتفضّل / اتفضّلي itfaddal / itfaddali	Please go ahead. To a man / woman.
آسف / آسفة، مينفعش. aasif / aasfa, mayinfa'sh.	Sorry, that is not possible. Male / female speaker.

“ممکن” is a useful opening for requests. Ask before photographing people or entering a private space, and respect the answer.

Practice: ask to sit, ask to open a window, then politely decline one request.

When something goes wrong

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
أنا تايه / تايهة. ana taayih / taayha.	I am lost. Male / female speaker.
شنطتي مش لاقيتها. shantiti mish laa'eeha.	I cannot find my bag.
التليفون ضاع. it-tilifoon daa'.	The phone is lost.
محتاج مساعدة. mihtaag musaa'da.	I need help. Male speaker.
محتاجة دكتور. mihtaaga duktoor.	I need a doctor. Female speaker.
ممکن تكلم الاستقبال؟ mumkin tikallim il-isti'baal?	Could you call reception?

Point to a map, address, or written description when words are not enough. Ask staff at an established business or your accommodation for assistance.

This is a language page, not emergency guidance. In an urgent situation, seek local assistance immediately rather than relying on a phrasebook.

Feelings & needs

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
أنا تعبان / تعبانة. ana ta'baan / ta'baana.	I am tired / unwell. Male / female speaker.
أنا جعان / جعانة. ana ga'aan / ga'aana.	I am hungry. Male / female speaker.
أنا عطشان / عطشانة. ana 'atshaan / 'atshaana.	I am thirsty. Male / female speaker.
أنا مبسوط / مبسوطة. ana mabsoot / mabsoota.	I am happy. Male / female speaker.
أنا جاهز / جاهزة. ana gaahiz / gaahza.	I am ready. Male / female speaker.
محتاج أرتاح شوية. mihtaag artaah shuwayya.	I need to rest a little. Male speaker.

Use “محتاجة” (mihtaaga) for a female speaker. “تعبان” can mean tired or unwell; add details if that distinction matters.

Partner practice: ask “إزيتك؟” and give a different answer each time.

Making plans

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
نشوفك بكرة؟ nshoofak bukra?	Shall we see you tomorrow? To a man.
الساعة كام؟ is-saa'a kaam?	What time?
نتقابل فين؟ nit'aabil feen?	Where shall we meet?
قدام المتحف. 'uddaam il-mathaf.	In front of the museum.
ماشي، أشوفك هناك. maashi, ashoofak hinaak.	Okay, I will see you there. To a man.
مع السلامة. ma'a is-salaama.	Goodbye.

Keep a plan clear

Repeat the day, time, and meeting place. “بكرة قدام المتحف” means “Tomorrow in front of the museum.” Add a time you have both agreed on.

You may hear “إن شاء الله” (in shaa' Allaah), “God willing,” when discussing future plans. Its intent depends on the speaker and context; confirm practical details respectfully.

What does فيه إيه؟ mean?

The words “فيه إيه؟” (feeh eeh?) ask what is happening or what is wrong. Expression, intonation, and the situation shape the meaning.

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
فيه إيه؟ إنت كويس؟ feeh eeh? enta kuwayyis?	What is wrong? Are you okay? A concerned question to a man.
فيه إيه؟ حصل حاجة؟ feeh eeh? hasal haaga?	What is happening? Did something happen?
مفيش حاجة. mafeesh haaga.	Nothing is wrong / nothing happened.
الأكل ده فيه إيه؟ il-akl da feeh eeh?	What is in this food? Here it asks about ingredients.

The phrase is not automatically rude, friendly, or angry. Avoid using a sharp tone with strangers. “ممکن توضّح؟” (mumkin tiwaddah?), “Could you explain?”, is another useful option.

Practice saying the first question with concern, then with surprise. Discuss how the meaning feels different.

Culture in conversation

Begin with respect

Greetings, patient listening, and a clear “thank you” do more than memorizing a long list of slang. Start with neutral, polite expressions until you understand the relationship.

Hospitality is an invitation

If offered food or a drink, accept or decline kindly. “شكراً، مش دلوقتي” (shukran, mish dilwa’ti) means “Thank you, not now.” Customs vary by household and setting.

Watch the situation

A phrase used among close friends may sound too familiar with a new acquaintance. “يا عم” (ya ‘amm) can be casual, teasing, or irritated; beginners can leave it out.

Ask before assuming

Ask about photography, dress expectations, and visiting etiquette in the place you are entering. Follow posted rules and the host’s directions.

Egyptians are individuals with different backgrounds and preferences. Use cultural notes as prompts for observation and questions, not as rules about everyone.

A day in Cairo

Read the exchange aloud. Ali and Mariam are fictional learners practicing a plan for the morning.

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
علي: صباح الخير يا مريم. Ali: sabaah il-kheer ya Maryam.	Ali: Good morning, Mariam.
مريم: صباح النور. إزيك؟ Maryam: sabaah in-noor. izzayyak?	Mariam: Good morning. How are you?
علي: كويس، الحمد لله. نشرب شاي؟ Ali: kuwayyis, il-hamdu lillaah. nishrab shaay?	Ali: Well, thank God. Shall we have tea?
مريم: ماشي. وبعد كده نروح المتحف؟ Maryam: maashi. wi ba'd kida nirooh il-mathaf?	Mariam: Okay. And then shall we go to the museum?
علي: تمام. نتقابل فين؟ Ali: tamaam. nit'aabil feen?	Ali: Great. Where shall we meet?
مريم: قدام الفندق. Maryam: 'uddaam il-fundu'.	Mariam: In front of the hotel.

Change the story: Replace tea with coffee and the museum with a restaurant.

Practice: meaning

A. Match the phrases

Write the English letter beside each Arabic phrase.

Arabic	English choices
١. شكراً	A. Where?
٢. فين؟	B. Tomorrow
٣. بكام؟	C. Thank you
٤. بكرة	D. Without sugar
٥. من غير سكر	E. How much?

B. Choose the meaning

6. "خلص" can mean:
A. Finished / enough B. Museum
7. "ممکن أصور؟" asks:
A. May I take a photo? B. Where is the taxi?
8. "مش فاهم" means:
A. I am ready B. I do not understand
9. "دلوقتي" means:
A. Now B. Yesterday
10. "يمين" means:
A. Left B. Right

Practice: conversation

C. Complete the exchange

Use each phrase once: شكرًا · فين · من غير سكر · بكام · بالراحة

11. To ask where the hotel is:

الفندق _____ ؟

12. To ask the price of an item:

ده _____ ؟

13. To order tea without sugar:

شاي _____ ، من فضلك.

14. To thank someone:

_____ .

15. To ask someone to repeat slowly:

ممکن تقولها تاني _____ ؟

D. Say it in Egyptian Arabic

16. Good morning.

17. I speak a little Arabic.

18. May I sit here?

19. The air conditioning is not working.

20. Goodbye.

Your own conversation

Choose one situation and write six short lines. Keep the exchange realistic: greet, ask, respond, clarify, thank, and close.

Choose a setting

- A café: order a drink and ask for the bill.
- A market: ask about an item and its price.
- A hotel: explain one problem and request help.
- A street: ask for directions and check a landmark.

Conversation planner

1. My greeting: _____
2. My question: _____
3. The reply: _____
4. My follow-up: _____
5. My thanks: _____
6. My closing: _____

Check yourself: Did I use the right form for the speaker and listener? Did I confirm the important detail? Could I say each line without reading?

Answer key: meaning

A. Matching

Item	Answer	Meaning
1	C	Thank you
2	A	Where?
3	E	How much?
4	B	Tomorrow
5	D	Without sugar

B. Meaning in context

Item	Answer
6	A - Finished / enough
7	A - May I take a photo?
8	B - I do not understand
9	A - Now
10	B - Right

Score one point for each correct answer in Exercises A-D: 20 points total. The six-line conversation is a separate speaking activity.

Answer key: conversation

C. Complete the exchange

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
١١. الفندق فين؟ il-fundu' feen?	11. Where is the hotel?
١٢. ده بكام؟ da bikaam?	12. How much is this?
١٣. شاي من غير سكر، من فضلك. shaay min gheer sukkar, min fadlak.	13. Tea without sugar, please.
١٤. شكراً. shukran.	14. Thank you.
١٥. ممكن تقولها تاني بالراحة؟ mumkin ti'oolha taani bir-raaha?	15. Could you say it again slowly?

D. Suggested answers

١٦. صباح الخير.
١٧. أنا بتكلّم عربي شوية.
١٨. ممكن أقعد هنا؟
١٩. التكييف مش شغال.
٢٠. مع السلامة.

Equivalent natural responses are acceptable. Spelling and pronunciation vary; judge meaning and appropriate use.

Pocket phrase reference

Egyptian Arabic & pronunciation	Meaning / use
أهلاً. ahlan.	Hello.
لو سمحت. law samaht.	Excuse me / please.
أنا بتعلم عربي. ana bat'allim 'arabi.	I am learning Arabic.
ممکن تقولها تاني؟ mumkin ti'oolha taani?	Could you say it again?
الحمام فين؟ il-hammaam feen?	Where is the bathroom?
الحساب كام؟ il-hisaab kaam?	How much is the bill?
ممکن تساعدني؟ mumkin tisaa'idni?	Could you help me?
شكراً. مع السلامة. shukran. ma'a is-salaama.	Thank you. Goodbye.

Save this page on your phone, or print it for practice. Add the address of your accommodation separately.

About the author & WCE



Dr. Wagih Elgohary, Ph.D., Ed.D., is an educator and artist whose work brings language learning, cultural awareness, leadership, and creativity together. He holds doctoral degrees in Organization and Management and Instructional Leadership, as well as degrees in Management and Leadership and Fine Arts.

World Cultures & Education (WCE) develops language and cultural learning resources that invite people to explore, ask questions, and connect with one another. This book belongs to that educational mission.

Continue learning

Use this guide alongside Arabic101, Arabic through art, cultural reading, and guided conversation. Short daily practice builds familiarity; real listening builds confidence.

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Editorial note: this edition replaces cropped presentation screenshots with newly typeset learning material. The cover image is retained from the WCE website's existing visual collection.



WORLD CULTURES & EDUCATION

Start small. Speak often. Connect.

كلمة بسيطة تفتح باباً للحوار.

From a first greeting to a café conversation, discover practical Egyptian Arabic for everyday encounters.

Inside: useful phrases, clear pronunciation aids, gender notes, realistic dialogues, cultural observations, and 20 practice questions with answers.

Dr. Wagih Elgohary

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