

TAJWEED AND PUNCTUATION MARKS IN THE QURAN

An Overview

Written By

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PREFACE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام
على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

This book highlights a brief account of the basics of Tajweed and punctuation marks in the Quran. The aim of this book is to generate interest in the readers to learn Tajweed al-Quran which is a very easy subject. It can be learned in a week's time by referring to related books or free online content and videos.

We hope our readers will benefit from it.

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1 TAJWEED AL-QURAN

It is a well-known fact that the colloquial/spoken Arabic language is different from the Arabic language of the Quran. There are certain rules that must be followed in reading and recitation of the Quran. Therefore, Arabs and non-Arabs, both need to learn how to read the Quran correctly.

The subject of correct reading/recitation of the Quran is known as 'Tajweed'. The Arabic word 'Tajweed' (تجويد) is derived from its root word Jawd (جود), meaning to 'adorn' or 'decorate' something.

The Quran is the word of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) in the reading/recitation of which care has to be taken.

It is in Quran - وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا [and recite the Quran slowly and distinctly.] (Al-Muzzammil - 4).

It is in Quran - الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ [Those to whom We have given the book, (recite and) follow it, as it ought to be (recited and) followed - they have faith in it.] (Al-Baqara - 121).

It is in Quran - فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ [When you read Quran, seek protection of Allah from the evil reprobated Satan.] (An-Nahl - 98).

Recitation of Bismillah (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ) is also necessary when we start the recitation of Quran.

The verse (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ) has come 114 times in Quran, 113 times at the beginning of every Surah, except Sura At-Tauba, and once in Sura An-Naml (verse 30).

The Quran testifies that it can be understood correctly only by the people of Sahih Iman.

It is in Quran - ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ .: فِيهِ .: هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ [This is the book in which there is no doubt; it is guidance to those who are righteous (Self-restraints - مُتَّقِينَ)] (Al-Baqara - 2).

Who are righteous (مُتَّقِينَ) people? They are the people of Sahih Iman. If your Iman is not correct, all your deeds go in vain. Therefore, if you are unaware of the truthful

teachings of Islam, avoid reading the Quran translated, printed and published by deviant sects. Read more in [Tafseer-e-Asedi](#) (in the Tafseer) of the this verse.

1.1 Mistakes in the recitation of Quran

There are two types of mistakes in the recitation of Quran, namely, **(I)** visible, and **(II)** invisible. As visible mistakes sometimes change the meaning of the word, it is important that these mistakes are avoided at all costs. Scholars agree that avoiding visible mistakes in reading/reciting the Quran is obligatory (فرض عين) for every Muslim, while avoiding invisible mistakes is a collective responsibility (فرض كفاية).

Fard Ayn (فرض عين) is an obligation on every single Muslim, but in Fard-e-Kifaya (فرض كفاية), if a few people are expert in Tajweed-al-Quran in a community, its responsibility is taken off from the rest. Imam Shafii said: 'Fard Kifaya is a command directed towards everyone, but seeking response from a few' (not all). This definition is agreed upon by the majority of Islamic scholars.

I. **Visible mistakes**

Correct pronunciation of Arabic letters fall into this category, as follows.

- a. Changing one letter into another is a visible mistake. Reading (ق) as (ك) or (ح) as (ه), or (ع) as (ل), etc., must be avoided. If you do not pronounce the alphabets of the Quran correctly, the meanings of the words and verses of the Quran become different. For instance, in place of (الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ), if (الْهَمْدُ لِلَّهِ) is read, means if (ح) is pronounced as (ه), the meaning will be "to extinguish fire is the work of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ)". Similarly, if the word (عَالَمِينَ) is read as (الْمِينَ), means, if (ع) is read as (ه), then the meaning will be grief and pain. The words (رَهْمَان) and (رَهِيم) have no meaning whatsoever. The correct words are (رَحْمَان) and (رَحِيم). If the word (تَعْبُدُ) is read as (تَابُدُ), the meaning will be 'run and abhorrence'. If we read (نَسْتَعِين) as (نَسْتَايِن), then the meaning will be anguish and agony. If (ضَالِّينَ) is read with (د), the meaning will be "those who show the right path". It will mean - O' God, do not show us the path of those who show the right path to the people.

Similarly, changing a short vowel (Harakah) into another, like changing Fat-hah into Dhammah must be avoided.

- b. Not observing the elongations (Madd) at all, reciting it quickly as if there is no Madd so that it turns into the length of a vowel is a visible mistake.

- c. Stopping or starting at an incorrect place, like stopping at لا إله (there is no God), without completing إلا الله (except Allah) is also a big mistake.

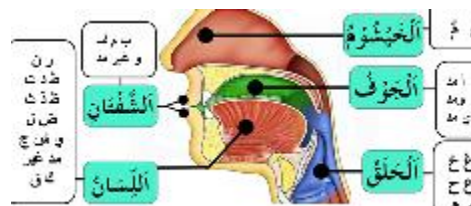
II. Invisible Mistakes

The invisible mistakes are those which are not obvious and are known only to those who are expert in Tajweed al-Quran. General Muslims are unable to perceive them. These mistakes include **(i)** Making the Madd slightly shorter or longer. **(ii)** Not observing the attributes of each letter fully, like slightly rolling the Raa', or exaggerating 'N' sound in Noon. **(iii)** Not observing the rules to pronounce letters when they are next to each other, like not merging certain letters that should be merged (إدغام) and not clearly pronouncing those which should be clearly pronounced (إظهار).

1.2 Correct pronunciation of Arabic letters

The pronunciation of Arabic letters is indeed a simple task. With a little practice, this can be achieved.

There are five main areas that make 17 articulation points (مخارج الحروف) from where Arabic letters are pronounced.



Picture shows five areas and their 17 articulation points from where the sounds of different Arabic letters originate. These are : **(i)** The empty space in the mouth and throat known as Al-Jauf (الجوف), **(ii)** The throat known as al-Halq (الحنق), **(iii)** The Tongue known as al-Lisaan (اللسان), **(iv)** The lips known as ash-Shafatan (الشفتان), and **(v)** The nasal area known as al-Khishoom (الخيشوم).

I. Characteristics of Arabic letters (صفات الحروف)

The manner in which Arabic letters are to be articulated/pronounced is known as the Characteristics of letters or attributes of letters (صفات الحروف).

a. The Noon 'Sakin', and 'Tanween' (نون ساكن و تنوين):

The Noon Sakin and Tanween (vowels that produces a "nnn" sound immediately after it) can be pronounced in different ways.

b. **The Meem Sakin** (ميم ساكن):

The Meem Sakin can also be pronounced in different ways.

c. **The Muddud** (مُدود):

These relate to the number of beats that are pronounced when a vowel letter is followed by a Mudd (مد) letter.

d. **Laam Qamariyya and Shamsiyya** (اللام القمرية و اللام الشمسية):

The Arabic alphabets consist of 28 letters that are written from right to left. Sometimes the letter ء is regarded as a separate letter. If you include ء as a separate letter, the total number of Arabic alphabets become 29.

Arabic alphabets are equally divided into two categories; Shamsiyya (solar) and Qamariyya (Lunar) letters. This categorization refers to the shape of the Arabic letters

- 1) Shamsiyya letters are (ت ث د ذ ر ز س ش ص ض ط ظ ل ن),
- 2) Qamariyya letters are (أ ب ج ح خ ع غ ف ق ك م ه و ي).

The Arabic word for "the" is 'al' (ال). The Laam in 'al' is pronounced if the following letter is 'Qamariyya', but becomes silent if the following letter is "Shamsiyya".

Since ش is a Shamsi letter, 'Ash-Shams' (الشَّمْس) is read as ash-shams and not al-shams – the ل in الشَّمْس is not pronounced. Similarly, ق is a Qamari letter, Al-Qamar (القَمَر) is read as al-qamar and not aq-qamar – meaning the ل in القَمَر is pronounced.

e. **Thickness and Thinness** (التفخيم والترقيق)

Some Arabic letters are pronounced thick with a heavy accent (التفخيم), while others are pronounced with a thin, light accent (الترقيق).

We will not go into details here as the subject of 'Tajweed' has been covered by Islamic scholars in detail and there are books available in print and online. There are online videos freely available that can be followed to learn this subject.

2 PUNCTUATION MARKS (علامات الوقف) IN THE QURAN

In order to avoid mistakes in recitation, various punctuation marks in the shape of abbreviated signs are provided in the Quran. It is mandatory to follow these signs.

There is some slight difference in the punctuation marks in the Quran published in the Arab world and the Othmani script published in other Muslim countries, particularly in Indian Sub-Continent. A brief account of these marks is provided below.

2.1 Punctuation marks in the Quran published in the Arab world

I. (o) - The perfect stop (التام الوقف):

'Waqf-e-Taam' represents the end of a verse. It is indicated by a circle at the conclusion of a Quranic verse. The reciter has to stop here and take a breath before reading further. It marks completion of the message of that sentence.

II. (م) Compulsory stop (الوقف اللازم)

When the sign of (م) is seen, you must stop, it is a mandatory stop. If you do not stop, the meanings of the verse get distorted.

However, if (م) sign appears above the alphabet (ن) which is followed by the alphabet (ب), like in مِنْ بَعْدِ, the alphabet (ن) should be read as (م). This rule is known as Idghaam in Tajweed.

III. (ج) The Permissible Stop (الوقف الجائز)

It points toward completion of the issue in that part of the verse. Thus you can stop here, although it is not obligatory to do so.

IV. (لا) Stopping Prohibited (الوقف الممنوع)

If لا appear in between the verse, it is mandatory **not** to stop recitation as it would change the meaning of Quranic verse. However, you can stop when it is used at the end of the verse above the circle mark (الوقف التام) Waqf at-Taam.

V. (قلے) The Permissible Stop (الوقف الجائز)

It means that one can stop or move on, but stopping is preferred.

VI. **(الوقف الجائز) The Permissible Stop (صلی)**

It means that one can stop or continue, but continuing is preferred.

VII. **(النقط المثلثة) Three Triangular dots (.:)**

This means you can stop at one of them, not on both. In the verse (ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ .:) (فيه) , if you are stopping at (ريب) then you should not stop at (فيه) or vice versa. Remember, you cannot stop at (ريب) and (فيه) both.

2.2 Punctuation marks in the Quran printed & published in Muslim countries

In addition to the above punctuation marks, there are some more signs used in the Othmani script of Quran published in Muslim countries, particularly in Indian Subcontinent. These are as follows.

VIII. **(الوقف المطلق) The Recommended stop (ط)**

The sign shows the end of a sentence, but not of an argument. It indicates that the reader should discontinue the recitation for an instant by taking breath. It is better to stop here.

IX. **(الوقف المرخص) The Licensed Pause (ص)**

Waqf-e-Murakh-khas is a symbol that permits the reader to take a break and take a breath, but it is advisable to carry on reading.

X. **(الوقف المجوز) Continue Reading (ز)**

It means one does not need to take a pause and continue the recital process, although there is no prohibition on stopping here.

XI. **(سكتة لطيفة) Small Pause (س)**

At this sign the reader should take a soft/short pause without breaking the breath. Sometime this sign is seen above the alphabet (ص). It means that

the (ص) should be pronounced as (س). But if this sign is under the (ص), then the letter (ص) should be pronounced as (ص) only.

XII. **(ق) Better not to Stop** (قيل عليه الوقف)

It is a sign that shows not to stop recitation. However, there are differences of opinions among scholars in this context.

XIII. **(صل) The Permissible Pause** (قد يوصل)

This specifies about the permission to continue reading although one can stop here.

XIV. **(قف) The Anticipation Mark**

'Qif' is inserted on the stop sign when a reader might expect the pause sign was not necessary.

XV. **(وقفه) The Longer Pause**

Waqfah indicates the longer pause than Saktah (س) with the same gist of not breaking one's breath while taking the break.

XVI. **(ك) Similar Meaning** (كذلك)

'Kadhaalik means 'like that'. This sign carries the same connotation of action as suggested for (لا) symbol.

XVII. **(صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) The Pause of Prophet** (وقف النبي)

This sign shows the places of the Quran where the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) took a pause.

XVIII. **(وقف غفران) The Sign of Supplication**

'Waqf e Ghufraan'" is a symbol indicating a place where the reciter and the listener should stop for momentary supplication.

XIX. **(وقف منزل) The Pause of Jibreel** (عليه السلام)

'Waqf-e-Manzil' is the sign indicating Hadhrat Jibreel's (عليه السلام) stopping and taking pause at the time of revealing the Quranic verses to the Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

XX. (ع) - Ruku

It denotes a paragraph or passage or section of the Quran. It is a mark (ع) placed at the end of a thematic shift in the subject matter. It is called Ruku because Muslims usually recite this much of the Quran in each Raka of Salah before going into the Ruku.

The Quran is divided into 114 Sura, 30 Juz (part), 7 Manzil and 557 Ruku. Related books can be referred for details in this context.

