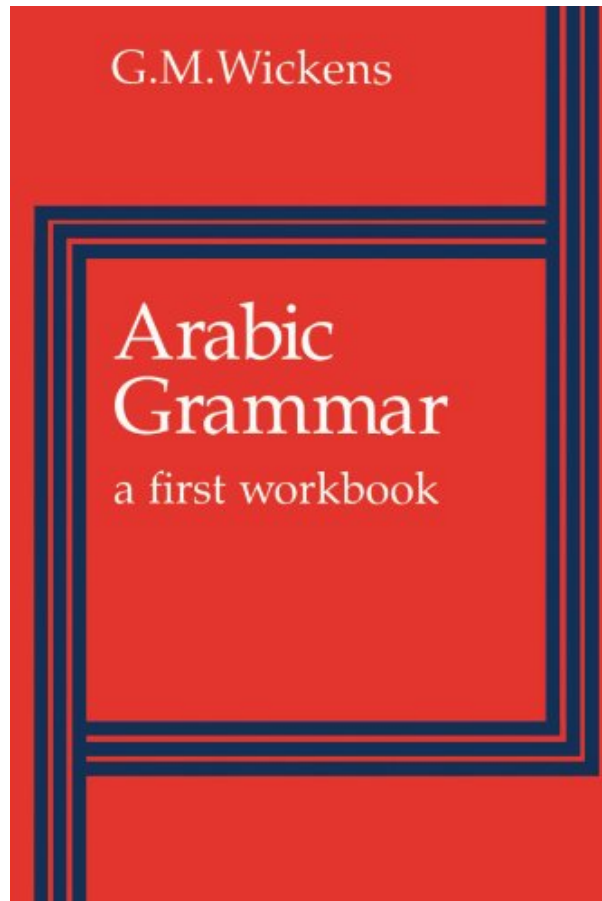


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Standard Arabic - the language of educated discourse throughout the Arab world - presents difficulties beyond those encountered in most foreign languages. Though today it is increasingly being popularised, it remains essentially an elitist, 'learned' language. It has been used without substantial change for over thirteen centuries, in regions as distant as Spain and China, in fields as diverse as poetry and medicine, mathematics and theology. Its morphology and syntax are largely constant, but vocabulary, sense, idiom and style often vary widely. Arabic script requires a good deal of intelligent guesswork: long vowels and diphthongs are easily confused with certain consonants or with each other; short vowels are not normally indicated at all; most consonants are distinguished only by the placing of dots, and can easily be mistaken or misprinted. This is a textbook designed to guide the first-year student through the difficult early stages of learning Arabic. It avoids the dry, 'scholarly' approach; it uses modern linguistic concepts sparingly, and takes simple short-cuts where they serve an immediate, practical purpose. Professor Wickens presents the basic facts of the language in a pragmatic order; he introduces the beginner to the recurring problems, shows various ways of recognising and tackling them, and helps accustom him from the outset to deal with the unvocalised (unvowelled) texts which he will nearly always encounter.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 180 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

Most helpful customer reviews

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

A very succinct grammar

By A Customer

This book describes in a few pages the elements of Arabic grammar. It is very useful for anyone struggling with large books (that contain exercises etc.) or incomplete explanations. It is a wonderful reference.

On the other hand, it's pretty scholarly, assumes considerable linguistic knowledge, and really not meant to teach Arabic to an unsophisticated beginner. The last part consists of texts that might as well have been deleted because they don't serve this beginner training purpose.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Dakhala al-ajnaad al-quds

By Ken Cober

I must admit up front I do have a particular fondness for this work as it was my constant companion during my first year of Arabic studies some years ago. It has many strengths and perhaps a weakness or two.

This is an introductory text for the study of classical, or at least standard literary, Arabic. This book will help you on your way to being able to read, say, Ibn al-Athir or other medieval writers, but will not help you should you find yourself in downtown Damascus in sudden need of directions to the nearest toilet. This is not a fault in the book; it is the nature of the Arabic language. There is a wide gulf between the literary language and the spoken "dialect" of any given region. This text is designed to teach you the former and states so up front.

There is much grammar in here but it is well presented. There is some possibly arcane terminology (one learns, for example, that a standard if-then sentence consists of a protasis and apodosis), but Prof. Wickens will make clear what he is discussing. The reading passages at the back of the book are essential for emphasizing the grammar studied in various chapters. Some of the readings are a trifle odd perhaps. Maybe eclectic might be a better description. As I recall they range from the death of Jahiz (crushed by the weight of his books when they fell on him) to ruminations on the usefulness of the camel to that sentence that always amused the students, "dakhala al-ajnaad al-quds yaqtuluuna sukaanaha kullahum." (Earlier versions had put "al-atraak" (Turks) in place of "sukaanaha" (inhabitants) but a sort of proto-PCism prompted the change.)

The one shortcoming I felt was that later chapters sometimes had the feeling of being rushed. In the chapter on Arabic numbers (which are, to be honest, fiendishly complicated) Prof. Wickens introduces the subject, gives a good overview, but then suggests the student consult one of the standard works, presumably Wright. Likewise, the section on hollow and weak verbs at some point states merely that if the student takes the rules governing x and applies the exceptions for y, he should be able to figure out the paradigm.

All that said, I highly recommend this book if you want a serious introduction to an endlessly fascinating and certainly never tedious subject. This work is a good introduction and, armed with the Hans Wehr dictionary, you will be ready to get a good start on just about anything written in standard Arabic in the last 1,300 years or so.

There is also a good introduction in which Prof. Wickens muses on the meaning of "fluency" in a language. Prof. Wickens used to recall with good humour early reviews which had singled out the introduction as the best and most useful part of the book. Perhaps it still is.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A favorite

By A Customer

I disagree strongly with the other review: let's face it, the subject itself (Arabic grammar) is what is tedious, not Wickens' book! In fact, I have always appreciated the way he tries to liven up a deadly-dull, but necessary subject. Throughout the book are many tips and personal thoughts from the author, and I would recommend Arabic Grammar as the best book out there. Remember, this book is a grammar, with all the paradigms and minutiae that "grammar" implies, but Wickens keeps it as lively as any grammar I've seen. Highly recommended!

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