

## Lesson Eleven: The Active Participle

### [إِسْمُ الْفَاعِلِ]

Most Arabic words are derived from three base letters that join together to establish a meaning. Placing these letters on various patterns produces different, but related words. *Lessons Eleven through Fifteen* cover several commonly encountered noun forms.

#### PRINCIPLE ONE

The *active participle* (إِسْمُ الْفَاعِلِ) refers to a person who does the action described by the base letters. For example, the letters ف-ع-ل mean, “to do” and its active participle فَاعِلٍ refers to “one who does.”

#### PRINCIPLE TWO

The *active participle* has both masculine and feminine forms.<sup>29</sup> Placing the three base letters on the pattern فَاعِلٍ produces the masculine form of the *active participle*. For example, replacing the *fā* ( ف ), *ain* ( ع ), and *lām* ( ل ) positions in this pattern with ع-ب-د (*to worship*) creates عَابِدٍ (*a male who worships*) [figure 11.1].

#### PRINCIPLE THREE

The feminine form of the *active participle* is constructed by placing the base letters on the pattern of فَاعِلَةٌ. Thus, ع-ب-د (*to worship*) becomes عَابِدَةٌ (*a female who worships*).

---

<sup>29</sup> All Arabic nouns, both living and non-living, are classified as either masculine or feminine. For example, the word شَمْسٌ (*sun*) is feminine while the word كِتَابٌ (*book*) is masculine. The masculine form is used to refer to *male beings* or *masculine objects*. The feminine form is used to refer to *female beings* or *feminine objects*.

فَاعِلٍ  
MASCULINE ACTIVE PARTICIPLE

↓ *Step One: Separate the letters  
of the model*

فَ ا ع ل

↓ *Step Two: Replace the base letters (ف-ع-ل)  
with corresponding new letters (ع-ب-د)*

عَ ا بِ د

↓ *Step Three: Reattach the letters  
of the word to form the masculine  
active participle*

عَابِدٍ  
A MALE WHO WORSHIPS *or*  
A WORSHIPER

FIGURE 11.1

FORMING THE MASCULINE *ACTIVE PARTICIPLE*

## PRINCIPLE FOUR

Arabic words enter four *grammatical states* (*lession five*). Of these, nouns enter three<sup>30</sup>: (1) *rafa'* (رَفْع), (2) *nasb* (نَصْب), and (3) *jarr* (جَرّ).

Nouns express these *states* through either (1) changes in vowelings on the last letter of the word or (2) changes in lettering at the end of the word.

## PRINCIPLE FIVE

Most *singular* Arabic nouns, whether masculine or feminine, express changes in their *grammatical states* through changes in vowelings on the last letter of the word. Two *dammahs* ( ُ ) indicate the *state* of *rafa'* (رَفْع), two *fathahs* ( َ ) indicate the *state* of *nasb* (نَصْب), and two *kasrahs* ( ِ ) indicate the *state* of *jarr* (جَرّ).<sup>31</sup> This is illustrated in *table 11.3* (the final table of this lesson) for both masculine singular and feminine singular forms of the *active participle*.

## PRINCIPLE SIX

Like verbs, Arabic nouns also have a dual form.<sup>32</sup> The dual is produced from the singular by (1) altering the vowelings of the last letter and (2) adding a designated ending. This ending reflects the *grammatical state* of the word. If the word is in the *state* of *rafa'* (رَفْع) then the suffix “أَنْ” is added; whereas if the word is in either the *state* of *nasb* (نَصْب) or *jarr* (جَرّ), the ending “يْنِ” is added. These endings are used for both the masculine and the feminine as illustrated in *table 11.1*. For example, عَابِدِ

---

<sup>30</sup> These grammatical states result from the interactions of nouns with other words in a sentence. For example, if a noun is the subject of the sentence, it takes on the *grammatical state* of *rafa'* (رَفْع). The goal of the beginner is to realize that *grammatical states* exist and to memorize their various forms. A discussion of the roles of words in sentences and what causes their *grammatical states* is found in advanced Arabic grammar books.

<sup>31</sup> The presence of a double vowel is known as *tanwin* (تَنْوِين).

<sup>32</sup> The dual is used to refer to *two individuals* or *two objects*.

(*a male worshiper*) becomes عَابِدَانِ (*two male worshipers*) in the *state of rafa'* (رَفْع) and عَابِدَيْنِ (*two male worshipers*) in the *states of nasb* (نَصْب) and *jarr* (جَرّ). While the feminine, عَابِدَةٌ (*a female worshiper*) becomes عَابِدَاتَانِ (*two female worshipers*) in the *state of rafa'* (رَفْع) and عَابِدَتَيْنِ (*two female worshipers*) in the *states of nasb* (نَصْب) and *jarr* (جَرّ).

#### PRINCIPLE SEVEN

The plural form of Arabic nouns is produced in two distinct ways: the “broken plural” and the “sound plural.” The “broken plural” is formed by (1) “breaking” apart the singular word, (2) inserting or removing letters, and (3) changing vowelings. A set pattern for these changes does not exist. Therefore, each broken plural must be individually memorized. For example, the broken plural for the singular كِتَابٌ (*book*) is كُتُبٌ (*books*), while the broken plural for the singular مَسْجِدٌ (*mosque*) is مَسَاجِدٌ (*mosques*). In each case the singular form was separated, letters were inserted or removed, and vowelings were changed.

#### PRINCIPLE EIGHT

The second type of Arabic plural is called the “sound plural,” and it is used by the *active participle*.<sup>33</sup> The “sound plural” is formed from the singular by (1) making slight alterations to the last letter of the singular and (2) adding a designated ending. This suffix varies between masculine and feminine forms and reflects the *grammatical state* of the word (*table 11.2*). In the case of the masculine sound plural, if the word is in the *state of rafa'* (رَفْع), the suffix “وْنَ” is added; whereas if the word is in either the *states of nasb* (نَصْب) or *jarr* (جَرّ), the ending “يْنَ” is added. For example, عَابِدٌ (*a male worshiper*) becomes عَابِدُونَ (*many male worshipers*) in the *state of rafa'* (رَفْع) and عَابِدِينَ (*many male worshipers*) in the *states of nasb* (نَصْب) and *jarr* (جَرّ).

<sup>33</sup> Some singular words only use the broken plural, others only use the sound plural. Rarely, a singular word will use both the sound and broken plurals. For the most part, *active participles* use the sound plural.

In the case of the feminine sound plural, if the word is in the *state* of *rafa'* (رَفْع), then the suffix “أَتٌ” is added; whereas if the word is in either *nasb* (نَصْب) or *jarr* (جَرّ), the ending “أَتٍ” is added. For example, عَابِدَةٌ (*a female worshiper*) becomes عَابِدَاتٌ (*many female worshipers*) in the *state* of *rafa'* (رَفْع) and عَابِدَاتٍ (*many female worshipers*) in the *states* of *nasb* (نَصْب) and *jarr* (جَرّ).

#### ESSENTIAL NOTE

The conjugations of the *active participle* must be memorized (*table 11.3*) before moving to the next lesson.

**TABLE 11.1**  
FORMING THE DUAL

BASE FORM	FINAL GOAL	STEP ONE		RESULT		ENDING		DUAL
فَاعِلٌ A male doer <i>Masculine singular in rafa'</i>	MASCULINE DUAL IN R- <i>AFA'</i>	Change vowel of the last letter to <i>fathab</i>	⇒	فَاعِلَ	+	أَنْ	⇒	فَاعِلَانِ Two male doers <i>Masculine dual in rafa'</i>
فَاعِلًا A male doer <i>Masculine singular in nasb</i>	MASCULINE DUAL IN N- <i>ASB</i>	Change vowel of the last letter to <i>fathab</i>	⇒	فَاعِلَ	+	يْنِ	⇒	فَاعِلَيْنِ Two male doers <i>Masculine dual in nasb</i>
فَاعِلٍ A male doer <i>Masculine singular in jarr</i>	MASCULINE DUAL IN J- <i>ARR</i>	Change vowel of the last letter to <i>fathab</i>	⇒	فَاعِلَ	+	يْنِ	⇒	فَاعِلَيْنِ Two male doers <i>Masculine dual in jarr</i>
فَاعِلَةٌ A female doer <i>Feminine singular in rafa'</i>	FEMININE DUAL IN R- <i>AFA'</i>	Change vowel of the last letter to <i>fathab</i>	⇒	فَاعِلَةَ	+	أَنْ	⇒	فَاعِلَتَانِ Two female doers <i>Feminine dual in rafa'</i>
فَاعِلَةً A female doer <i>Feminine singular in nasb</i>	FEMININE DUAL IN N- <i>ASB</i>	Change vowel of the last letter to <i>fathab</i>	⇒	فَاعِلَةَ	+	يْنِ	⇒	فَاعِلَتَيْنِ Two female doers <i>Feminine dual in nasb</i>
فَاعِلَةٍ A female doer <i>Feminine singular in jarr</i>	FEMININE DUAL IN J- <i>ARR</i>	Change vowel of the last letter to <i>fathab</i>	⇒	فَاعِلَةَ	+	يْنِ	⇒	فَاعِلَتَيْنِ Two female doers <i>Feminine dual in jarr</i>

**TABLE 11.2**  
FORMING THE SOUND PLURAL

BASE FORM	FINAL GOAL	STEP ONE		RESULT		ENDING		SOUND PLURAL
فَاعِلٌ A male doer Masculine singular in rafa'	MASCULINE SOUND PLURAL IN RAFA'	Change vowel of the last letter to dammah	⇒	فَاعِلٌ	+	وْنَ	⇒	فَاعِلُونَ Many male doers Masculine plural in rafa'
فَاعِلًا A male doer Masculine singular in nasb	MASCULINE SOUND PLURAL IN NASB	Change vowel of the last letter to kasrah	⇒	فَاعِلٍ	+	يْنَ	⇒	فَاعِلِينَ Many male doers Masculine plural in nasb
فَاعِلِ A male doer Masculine singular in jarr	MASCULINE SOUND PLURAL IN JARR	Change vowel of the last letter to kasrah	⇒	فَاعِلٍ	+	يْنَ	⇒	فَاعِلِينَ Many male doers Masculine plural in jarr
فَاعِلَةٌ A female doer Feminine singular in rafa'	FEMININE SOUND PLURAL IN RAFA'	Drop final ta' marbutah	⇒	فَاعِلَ	+	أَتْ	⇒	فَاعِلَاتُ Many female doers Feminine plural in rafa'
فَاعِلَةً A female doer Feminine singular in nasb	FEMININE SOUND PLURAL IN NASB	Drop final ta' marbutah	⇒	فَاعِلَ	+	أَتْ	⇒	فَاعِلَاتٍ Many female doers Feminine plural in nasb
فَاعِلَةٍ A female doer Feminine singular in jarr	FEMININE SOUND PLURAL IN JARR	Drop final ta' marbutah	⇒	فَاعِلَ	+	أَتْ	⇒	فَاعِلَاتٍ Many female doers Feminine plural in jarr

TABLE 11.3

## THE ACTIVE PARTICIPLE

FEMININE			MASCULINE			
SOUND PLURAL	DUAL	SINGLE	SOUND PLURAL	DUAL	SINGLE	
فَاعِلَاتٌ female doers	فَاعِلَتَانِ two female doers	فَاعِلَةٌ a female doer	فَاعِلُونَ male doers	فَاعِلَانِ two male doers	فَاعِلٌ a male doer	رَفَع
فَاعِلَاتٍ female doers	فَاعِلَتَيْنِ two female doers	فَاعِلَةً a female doer	فَاعِلِينَ male doers	فَاعِلَيْنِ two male doers	فَاعِلًا a male doer	نَصَب
فَاعِلَاتٍ female doers	فَاعِلَتَيْنِ two female doers	فَاعِلَةً a female doer	فَاعِلِينَ male doers	فَاعِلَيْنِ two male doers	فَاعِلٍ a male doer	جَرَّ