

Lesson Fifteen: The Superlative Noun

[اسم التفضيل]

PRINCIPLE ONE

The *superlative noun* (اسم التفضيل) indicates the *highest degree* or the *comparative* of the quality described by the base letters. For example, the letters ف-ع-ل mean “to do” and its *superlative noun* أفعل refers to “one who does the most” or “one who does more.”

PRINCIPLE TWO

The masculine singular of the *superlative noun* is constructed by placing the three base letters on the pattern of أفعل (table 15.1). For example, replacing the *fā'* (ف), *‘ain* (ع), and *lām* (ل) positions in this pattern with ك-ب-ر (*to be big*) forms أكبر (*a male who is biggest or a male who is bigger*). This pattern is *ghair munsarif* (غير منصرف) and therefore neither permits a double vowel [*tanwīn*] nor a single *kasrah* on its last letter.

PRINCIPLE THREE

The masculine form of the *superlative noun* uses the standard dual, and it uses both the sound plural and the broken plural (table 15.1). The broken plural of the masculine *superlative* is *ghair munsarif* (غير منصرف).

PRINCIPLE FOUR

The feminine form of the *superlative noun* is constructed by placing the three base letters on the pattern of فُعَلَى.³⁴ For example, replacing the *fā'* (ف), *‘ain* (ع), and *lām* (ل) positions in this pattern with ك-ب-ر (*to be big*) forms كُبْرَى (*a female who is biggest or a female who is bigger*). This form undergoes changes in *grammatical states* without reflecting a change at the

³⁴ Although the final letter of this word resembles a *ya'*, it is an *‘alif maqsurah*. This letter, like the standard *‘alif*, causes extension of the letter before it. Thus, the feminine form of the *superlative noun* is pronounced *fu'la*.

end of the word. Therefore, the pattern of the word is the same for all three *grammatical states* (*table 15.2*).

PRINCIPLE FIVE

The feminine form of the *superlative noun* uses the standard dual, and it uses both the sound plural and the broken plural (*table 15.2*).

ESSENTIAL NOTE

The conjugations of the *superlative noun* must be memorized (*tables 15.1 and 15.2*) before moving to the next lesson.

TABLE 15.1

THE MASCULINE SUPERLATIVE NOUN

| MASCULINE | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--------|
| BROKEN PLURAL | SOUND PLURAL | DUAL | SINGULAR | |
| أَفَاعِلُ males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعُلُونَ males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعِلَانِ two males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعُلٌ a male who does more (or the most) | رَفْعٌ |
| أَفَاعِلُ males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعَلِينَ males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعَلَيْنِ two males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعَلٌ a male who does more (or the most) | نَصْبٌ |
| أَفَاعِلُ males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعَلِينَ males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعَلَيْنِ two males who do more (or the most) | أَفْعَلٌ a male who does more (or the most) | جَرٌّ |

TABLE 15.2

THE FEMININE SUPERLATIVE NOUN

| FEMININE | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--------|
| BROKEN PLURAL | SOUND PLURAL | DUAL | SINGULAR | |
| فُعُلٌ females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَيَاتُ females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَيَانِ two females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَى a female who does more (or the most) | رَفْعٌ |
| فُعُلًا females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَيَاتٍ females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَيْنِ two females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَى a female who does more (or the most) | نَصْبٌ |
| فُعُلٌ females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَيَاتٍ females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَيْنِ two females who do more (or the most) | فُعُلَى a female who does more (or the most) | جَرٌّ |