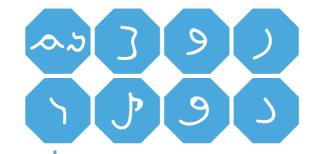
# History of the **Arabic Alphabet**

What are the historical origins of the Arabic writing system? This graphic helps examine the link between earlier alphabets and how they developed into the Arabic alphabet we know today, while also exploring how other languages from completely different language families use the Arabic alphabet as their primary writing system. Featured below is a selection of letters from each alphabet and how they have evolved throughout history.







### **Persian**

Arabic was first introduced to southwest and central Asia after a series of conquests by Arab Muslim dynasties in c. 650 CE. Persian adopted a modified version of the Arabic alphabet starting c. 900 CE.

### **Phoenician**

The earliest recorded inscriptions of the Phoenician alphabet can be traced to c. 1200 BCE throughout modern-day Lebanon and Syria. The alphabet simplified over time, shifting from Egyptian hieroglyphics to the more stylized form seen above.

### **Nabataean**

The Nabataean alphabet was based on Aramaic and first appeared in c. 100 BCE in the ancient city of Petra, located in modern-day Jordan. Nabataean was written in two styles, monumental and cursive, with its cursive form displaying a clear connection to the modern Arabic alphabet.

## **Arabic**

Between 400 CE and 700 CE, the Arabic alphabet developed from the Nabataean alphabet. Inscriptions throughout Greater Syria and the northern Arabian Peninsula display its influence today: however, the Arabic alphabet we use today was not developed until c. 700 CE.

1200 CE

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### 900 BCE

200 CE

400 CE - 700 CE

### **Aramaic**

The Arameans adopted the Phoenician alphabet beginning in c. 900 BCE, and slowly adapted it into their own distinct alphabet. Aramaic spread throughout the modern-day Middle East through the conquests of the Assyrian empire, who used the Arameans as scribes. After that, Aramaic was established as the lingua-franca for trade and commerce throughout the region.

100 BCE

# **Syriac**

The Syriac alphabet was a direct descendent of the Aramaic alphabet, with its earliest inscriptions dating to c. 200 CE. Syriac was primarily used as the language of the church after the advent of Christianity. The influence of Syriac on the modern-day Arabic alphabet remains a highly contested topic among scholars today.

### Urdu

Urdu is spoken primarily in Pakistan, although it is also spoken in countries throughout southwest and central Asia. The Arab invasion of the Indian subcontinent in c. 1200 CE resulted in the languages meeting, leading Urdu to adopt a modified version of the Arabic alphabet closely related to the Persian alphabet developed earlier.

**—** ......

1500 CE





### **Pashto**

Pashto, a language closely related to Persian, adopted a modified version of the Arabic alphabet starting in c. 1500 CE. Pashto is one of Afghanistan's official languages and is also commonly spoken in Pakistan.

### Preceding **Alphabet**



1200 BCE







### Reference

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