

Egyptian Arabic Phrases — Summary table

More detail below. But here's your quick guide to the most common Egyptian Arabic phrases!

English	Arabic (transliteration)	عربي
Hello (basic greeting)	<i>salaam 'aleikum</i>	سلام عليكم
Goodbye	<i>ma'a salaameh</i>	مع سلامة
How's it going?	<i>3aamil eh?</i>	عامل ايه؟
	<i>izzayak?</i>	ازيك؟
	<i>eh akhbaar?</i>	ايه اخبار؟
	<i>akhbaarak eh?</i>	اخبارك ايه؟
Fine	<i>kwayyis, kullu</i>	كويس، كله تمام
Everything's good	<i>tamaam</i> <i>alHamdulillah</i>	الحمد لله
Excuse me!	<i>ba3d iznak</i> (or <i>iznik</i> to a female)	بعد اذنك
Sorry (bumping into a woman if you're a man)	<i>salaam 3aleikum</i>	سلام عليكم
Pardon me	<i>law samaHt</i>	لو سمحت
Excuse me, I want to tell you something	<i>3yiiz a'ool lak ba3d iznak</i>	عيز اقول لك بعد اذنك

Hey, driver!	<i>ya usTa!</i>	يى اسطى
Officer/sir!	<i>HaDritak</i>	حضرتاك
What's this, please?	<i>eh dah min faDlak?</i>	اية دة من فضلك
How much is this?	<i>bikam dah?</i>	بكم دة
I want...	<i>ana 3ayiiz...</i>	انا عيز
It's too expensive!	<i>ghaali 'awwi!</i>	غالي اوي
It's so much!	<i>ktiir awwi!</i>	كتير اوي
I will pay...	<i>ana badfa3...</i>	انا بدفع
OK	<i>maashi</i>	ماسي
	<i>Tayyib</i>	طيب
	<i>tamaam</i>	تمام
	<i>Okey</i>	اوكي
Yes, of course/ thank you	<i>aywa, tab3an/shukran</i>	ايوى، تبعن\سكرا
No, sorry/thank you	<i>la, aasif/shukran</i>	لا، اسف\سكرا
You're welcome	<i>'afwan</i>	عفواً
May I [please]?	<i>mumken [min faDlak]?</i>	ممكن؟
May I take a photo ⁶ here?	<i>mumken akhud Surah hina?</i>	ممكن اخذ صورة؟
May I look, please?	<i>mumken ashuuf min faDlak?</i>	ممكن اشوف من فضلك؟

May I go in from here?	<i>momken adkhul min hina?</i>	ممکن ادخل من هنا؟
I just want to look	<i>ana 3ayiiz ashuuf bas</i>	انا عيز اشوف بس
Thanks	<i>shukran</i>	شكرا
A thousand thanks	<i>alf shokr</i>	الف شكر
Where is this?	<i>fayn dah/il Hammaam, min faDlak?</i>	فين ده؟
I go this way?	<i>baruuh zayy kida?</i>	بروح زي كدا؟
straight ahead	<i>3ala Tuul</i>	على طول
Finished! It's over! I'm done!	<i>khallaS!</i>	خلص!
I don't need this	<i>la, ana mish miHtaag dah</i>	لا، انا مش محتاج ده
I don't know.	<i>ana mish 3aarif/3aarfa</i>	انا مش عارف\عارفة
Please go ahead!		
Please sit!	<i>itfaDDal/itfaDDali</i>	إنفضّل
Please take this!		

One of our favourite resources for Egyptian Arabic was Glossika — a sentence bank that covers enough languages for it to include dialects of Arabic (including Egyptian and also Moroccan Arabic).

Try it out — they have a 7 day free trial and sometimes have promos for full-year subscriptions (they'll be listed below if so).

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- Learning Egyptian Arabic phrases by [repeating sentences by natives with Glossika](#)
- Our recommendations for [the best Egyptian Arabic e-books](#)
- Why and how to [learn Modern Standard Arabic](#)



How to say “Hello”, “How are you” and “Goodbye” in Egyptian Arabic

In this section we’ll go through the basic Egyptian Arabic phrases to greet people and take leave.

Say “Hello” and “Goodbye” in Egyptian Arabic — simplified

Don’t get bored by this basic phrase. I explain why we mention this explicitly below... it’s a useful shortcut to avoid learning all the other greetings!

- ***salaam 3aleikum* (سلام عليكم):** “Hello”. Note: you can pronounce the 3 softly in this expression, so it’s really just “salam ‘aleikum”.

Literally “Peace be upon you.” This is a standard Muslim greeting but is used generally across the population, just more enthusiastically by very observant Muslims. The reason this greeting is awesome is that it symbolises you’re friendly to Muslims.

Normally when you walk up to someone, there’s a bit of a pause as they think “Who is this person? Should I say something in English?” but when you say *salaam 3aleikum* they’ll usually respond in Arabic with a response, maybe even with a big smile.

Textbooks will tell you all kinds of other greetings, like variations on hello, or the call/response pairings of good morning, evening,

afternoon etc. They're beautiful and you can definitely use them (and we do). **In Egypt, it's OK to just know *salaam 3aleikum*** because:

- As a foreigner, you're usually the one initiating the conversation in Arabic. They might otherwise say "hello" or nothing at all.
- It's useful in every situation — instead of "hello", "good morning" or "good afternoon. If you're unsure of the time, it's also a good fallback!
- It's easier to pronounce than some of those other expressions.

The full response, which you never need to learn to say yourself as you're rarely the person being greeted in the early stages, is *w 3aleikum es-salaam w raHmat-allah wa barakaatu* (و عليكم السلام ورحمة الله و بركاته) means "and peace, mercy and the blessings of God be upon you". If someone says that back to you, it's very positive. But you'll never have to say it.

- ***ma'a salaameh* (مع سلامة): "Goodbye"**

This means "with peace", but is a generic goodbye. Use it and you'll hear the same back.

A note on religion: even though this is a standard Muslim greeting, there is no taboo on saying it if you're not a Muslim, or saying it to a non-Muslim (or both).

Egypt is 10% Coptic Christian, and some of the friends you make there are likely to be as well. They are by no means offended by the greeting and it's 100% safe to use

— just a little less likely to build the instant trust that it would with Muslims.

Read next: [11 Essential Ways to Say Goodbye in Arabic](#)

Say “How’s it going?” or “How’re things?” in Egyptian Arabic

The next thing to ask is how someone is. There are lots of formal ways of saying it, but there are three really common ways people say this in Arabic. You can even just string them together, to show how enthusiastic you are about knowing how the other person is doing.

- *3aamil eh?* (عامل ايه؟)
- *izzayak?* (ازيك؟)
- *eh akhbaar?* (ايه اخبار؟)

You can say them all at once or say one or any combination of the questions. They all effectively mean “how are you” or “how’s it going”, though literally have other meanings. As soon as someone has responded to the above *salaam 3aleikum* fire all of these out!

Then the responses:

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- *kwayyis, kullu tamaam. alHamdulillah* (كويس، كله تمام. الحمد لله):
“Fine, everything’s great. [Praised be God]”

You can also string these together if you want, or say them individually.

The last word, *alHamdulillah*, “Praised be God”, is used very casually. It sounds very religious but it’s just an expression that’s used in conversation, even by people who don’t consider themselves religious. You can just use it in response to a question on how you’re doing.

Read next: [12 Ways to Say How Are You in Arabic + Responses](#)

Egyptian Arabic Phrases to Get someone’s attention

There are a few times you might have to get someone’s attention in Egyptian Arabic: to get past someone, to get a waiter or a cashier’s attention, or just to call out to someone.

What to say to squeeze past someone in Egyptian Arabic

- *ba3d iznak* (or *iznik* to a female) (بعد اذنك): “Excuse me!”

You use this when you have to squeeze past someone anywhere. It is a very polite expression. If you’re ever at a table and want to excuse yourself from people to leave, you can also use it then, so it kind of works like “with your permission”.

For some reason, every time people learn a language, they know how to say hundreds of things before this extremely common expression that should be the first thing anyone learns. I've learned this lesson, and it's one of the first questions I ask teachers because it's rarely in textbooks!

It's used commonly in the metro, airports or anywhere where you might encounter a lot of people. It's especially used when someone wants to push past someone of the opposite sex.

Apologising when you bump into a woman (if you're a man)

Bumping into a woman is slightly more cause for concern in Egypt (or other Middle Eastern countries) if you're a man. I've seen people do it, and what I notice is that the men apologise by saying *salaam 3aleikum* as if they were greeting them.

You can interpret this any way you will, but I interpreted it as a slightly more formal acknowledgement of respect of the other person than simply saying "sorry".

Getting a waiter's or cashier's attention in Egyptian Arabic

- Simpler one: *law samaHt* (لو سمحت): "If you please"
- More colloquial: *3yiliz a'ool lak ba3d iznak* (عيز اقول لك بعد يذذك): "Excuse me, I want to tell you something"

In good restaurants where you have a waiter, or even in [shawerma shops](#) where you need to talk to the guy making your sandwich, you'll need to use this phrase to get attention. You can use the simpler form if you want, but the more colloquial one will be more natural.

After you get their attention, just call out what you want. A bottle of water, a fork, or whatever. They'll bring it to you. No need to wait for them to come over.

Addressing Drivers and Police officers in Egyptian Arabic

- To drivers: *ya usTa!* (يا اسطى): "Hey, driver!"

Want to get on that [microbus](#), ferry or tuk-tuk that's speeding past? Call this out, and avoid saying "hey!" or "hello!" or whatever the first thing is that comes to your mind that labels you as a non-Arabic speaker.

- To police officers: *HaDritak* (حضرتك): "Sir"

You often have to talk to police officers in Egypt. Maybe you took a photo in the wrong place or [forgot that drones are illegal](#). Maybe you just look like a potential threat.

Address a police officer the right way with *HaaDirtak* and you'll ensure that the conversation will continue flowing smoothly. I was told once "You're talking to a police officer!" after I asked a question

and had no idea what the officer meant. I'm often rude in many ways, but in this case I think I was rude in this particular way.

Of course, normally people will be calling out to you first if you're in touristy parts of town.

Useful Egyptian Arabic Phrases for Shopping and Bargaining

Naturally in Egypt you'll purchase and devour sweets and kebab by the kilo, and buy a whole bunch of souvenir teacups, coffee pots, cloth and statues that you'll only find out later were all made in China.

Questions for shopping in Egyptian Arabic

You don't have to know the many names of things. We constantly encounter new fruits, sweets, pastries and foods. So do foreigners, and I presume even locals need to learn sometimes (because I'd ask my teachers e.g. what kind of sweet something was and they'd go "I dunno, we just call it 'sweets'").

- ***eh dah min faDlak?*** (اية دة من فضلك): "What's this, please?" A common question. Don't worry if it makes you seem foreign. They know you're foreign! Also, it's a common question many others ask.
- ***bikam dah?*** (بكم دة): "How much is this?" You'll need to know your numbers to understand (or hope they have a calculator, or

offer them one).

Saying what you want in Egyptian Arabic

- *ana 3ayiiz...* (انا عايز): “I want...”

Basically the first words most foreigners learn in Egypt. You can just use it and point to something and use the word for “that”, which is *dah* (دة). i.e. *ana 3yiiz dah*. They’ll give it to you.

They might respond *Haga tanya?* which just means “anything more?” to which you say *la, shukran*. (see below on being polite.)

Bargaining in Egyptian Arabic

This could be a whole topic by itself. But let’s distill it to a couple of core Egyptian Arabic phrases for bargaining:

- *ghaali ‘awwi!* (غالي اوي): “It’s too expensive!” This gets the point across.
- *ktiir awwi!* (كتير اوي): “It’s so much!” Similarly, you don’t have to say much more
- *ana badfa3...* (انا بادفاع): “I will pay...” Say how much you’ll pay.

Bargaining is an (annoying to us) necessity of buying anything in Egypt. Starting from the airport, drivers will try to charge you 300 LE for a ride that should cost 100. An initial multiple of 3x the final price is common. Just bear in mind that you’re not being rude and that a refusal is not a “no”, it’s an invitation to continue bargaining.

Whatever they're saying is just noise in the air that's an excuse to charge more, and is just a way of saying "offer me slightly more". Like in most cultures, you can't give one price and stick to it, you have to give them a little face by budging a bit.

Cultural note: Egyptian bargaining is among the more aggressive we've EVER encountered. It's a tough, competitive economy, and people struggle to make ends meet. Be prepared for the worst, as in our travels we've rarely had to be this aggressive or push back this hard.

Even after you've agreed, you might find the price changes again, like once you're near your destination in a taxi. They might ask you for a tip (*bakhsheesh*) or make some more grumbling sounds about the traffic being heavy, or whatever. You don't have to move much, just budget 10% more into the price you agree to initially.

When you finally reach an agreement, you can say:

- *maashi* (ماسي): OK
- *Tayyib* (طيب): OK
- *tamaam* (تمام): OK
- *Okey* (اوكي): OK

You can use any of these for OK. I'm including them all here just because you might hear some or all of them as a question.

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Polite Egyptian Arabic Phrases

Arabic is a language littered with niceties that are spoken almost routinely. There are many more ways of greeting people, praising people, imploring people for help and thanking them than there are in most languages.

There's also a call-and-response pattern to most greetings that is quite floral. For example, the response to [Good morning in Arabic is to say “A morning of light!” or “A morning of flowers!”](#). Who wouldn't want that?

You don't need to know those though — those come when you're interested in learning Arabic (and any book or tutor will teach them).

Here are a few of the most common polite phrases in Egyptian Arabic that will get you through a lot of situations as a visitor.

Saying yes or no in Egyptian Arabic

Like in any language, nobody in Arabic just says “yes” or “no”. It sounds strange and artificial. You have to add a softener, or some suffix. For example, if someone asked you “how's things? Everything OK?” you wouldn't just say “yes” like a robot. You'd say “yes, thank you!”. It's just human.

- *aywa, tab3an/shukran* (ايوى، تبعن\سكرا): “Yes, of course/thank you”
- *la, aasif/shukran* (لا، اسف\سكرا): “No, sorry/thank you”

Asking for permission in Egyptian Arabic

In the crazy world of Cairo, everything is possible and everything might be forbidden. It all depends on a few things like how confident you are, who you are, whether you've paid the right price to the right person, time of day, weather, and who knows what else.

The core of asking for permission is:

- ***mumken, min faDlak?* (ممكن):** “May I, please?” If you're unsure how to say the rest, just say this word. The first word literally means “may I?”. It's ideally softened with the “please” ending (min faDlak)

This is the core of it. It's not a grammatically complete sentence, but it gets the idea across.

- ***mumken akhud Surah hina?* (ممكن اخذ صورة):** “May I take a photo here?” It's important to ask. You never know if it's a sensitive or secure place. It might also be a private place. Finally, they may ask you for a tip.
- ***mumken ashuuf min faDlak?* (ممكن اشوف من فضلك):** “May I look, please?”
- ***momken adkhul min hina?* (ممكن ادخل من هنا):** “May I go in from here?” Something to ask if you're not sure if it's the right entrance.

Saying what you are doing in Egyptian Arabic

Really one sentence is important here:

- *ana 3ayiiz ashuuf bas* (انا عيز اشوف بس): “I just want to look”

Use this to make clear you don't want to buy anything. It's OK to just look.

Thanking people in Egyptian Arabic

- Standard: *shukran* (شكرا). Just “Thanks”. You say this after basically every interaction.
- More grateful: *alf shukr* (الف شكر): “A thousand thanks”. To show your appreciation, after someone has been very helpful.

The latter phrase will get an Arabic response even if the conversation has been mostly English.

How to get directions in Egyptian Arabic

The “asking and giving directions” section in textbooks is always very complicated because of all the weird ways in which people can give you directions. If you start to think of all the ways to describe where something is and how to get there you'll be swimming in unnecessary vocabulary. We prefer an 80-20 approach to asking directions.

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Why learning to give and get directions is a waste of time

However, knowing how to understand (or give) complicated directions in Arabic (or any language) is totally unnecessary.

Here's why:

1. **You'll never give directions.** What do you know? You're not from here. Your response will just be "*ana mish 3aarif*" (see below, "General Useful Words")
2. **You only need to ask one question: Where is this?** And point to it, or explain it.
3. **The response can be very complicated and require a lot of detailed vocabulary.** Yesterday I was told "You have to follow this path, then go through a gate. The guard will let you through. You go up the stairs, around the building and down a pathway, then at the boat ramp you catch the boat". So many unnecessary details! We just looked where his hand was pointing.
4. **The only response you need to understand is which way they're pointing.** You go that way

Core Egyptian Arabic phrases for getting directions

- *fayn dah/il Hammaam, min faDlak?* (فين ده): "Where is this?"
- *baruuh zayy kida?* (بروح زي كدا): "I go this way?" Use this to confirm which way you have to go.
- *3ala Tuul* (على طول): "straight ahead"

You do need to know the word *il Hammaam*. It means bathroom. It's the place people most often need to know how to get to. Apart from that, say *dah* and use any indication you can to say what you're looking for, e.g. a name written on a card, or pointing at something on your phone.

In general, the only direction that matters is "straight ahead". Everything is straight ahead in a certain direction. Look for where they point and go that way. Even if they say something very long, the first direction you have to go is where they'll point. That's your answer

General Useful Egyptian Arabic Phrases

Apart from all the above, there's a number of critical expressions we learned in Egyptian Arabic to make our lives go more smoothly.

General Useful Phrases in Egyptian Arabic

Here are a bunch of words we've found useful just in everyday life.

- ***la, ana mish mihtaag dah*: (I don't need this)**. We often have to say this to vendors when we're in a touristy part of town. It tells them a) you don't want it and b) you speak Arabic and aren't to be trifled with; they should go bug that obviously more foreign person behind you

- **khallaS! (خلص):** Finished! or I'm done! or It's over! or That's enough! a super useful word
- **ana mish 3aarif/3aarfa (انا مش عارف\عارفة):** I don't know. Good way to get yourself out of anything!

Read next: [15 Beautiful Arabic Words and Their Meanings](#)

The “Invitation to treat” in Egyptian Arabic

- **itfaDDal/itfaDDali (m/f):** “Please.” This is a general invitational word, an invitation to do something

This word deserves its own section. It's very important. You hear it all the time and constantly have opportunities to use it, but it has no direct equivalent in English.

It's an expression used as an “invitation to treat” in these situations

- Inviting someone to take a seat. You gesture at the seat and say *tafaDDal/i*.
- Giving someone something, e.g. money, change or the goods being bought.
- Asking someone to do something politely, e.g. to rest (with a word afterwards saying what they're inviting you to do, but you generally know from which way they're pointing)

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The word *itfaDDal* does have equivalents in other languages such as *je vous en prie* in French, *prego* in Italian, *bevakasha* (בבקשה) in Hebrew or *befarma'iid* (بفرماید) in Farsi.

See a whole article on the topic of [the “politeness” word in other languages](#).

Quick note on Egyptian Arabic Transliteration

There are many ways of writing Arabic using romanisation, but we use a simple form for Egyptian we learned from our [textbooks](#).

Generally, we prefer romanisation (over Arabic or any native script) at the early to intermediate stages, learning the script in parallel. Romanisation is a quicker vehicle to speaking and [speaking is our first priority](#). For Egyptian Arabic in particular, romanisation conveys the pronunciation more effectively than the written Arabic script.

The written Arabic script omits vowels nearly all the time. A word like “thankful”, “*motashakker*“, is just written with five letters: m-t-sh-k-r. You miss critical details you need to know to pronounce the word like vowels, the double letter *k* and where the emphasis lies. Our teachers prefer to use Arabic script. But they’d have to constantly explain the pronunciation, which I’d write down in separate notes.

The below isn’t meant to be a pronunciation guide to Arabic, as lots of those exist on the Internet.

The way we romanise Arabic is as follows:

- **Consonants:**

- Capitalised consonants *D* (ض), *H* (ح), *S* (ص), *T* (ط) and *Z* (ظ) are “hard” letters, produced with your tongue touching the back of your front teeth.
- Consonants unique to Arabic: *kh* (خ) represents the ‘ch’ like in the Scottish ‘loch’, ‘ (أ), an apostrophe, represents a glottal stop, *gh* (غ) is like a harder *kh* sound and *ʕ* (ع) is a consonant from the back of the throat.
- Other consonants are as they are in English: *b* (ب), *d* (د), *h* (ه), *w* (و), *z* (ز), *k* (ك), *l* (ل), *m* (م), *n* (ن), *s* (س), *f* (ف), *r* (ر), *t* (ت)

- **Vowels:**

- Short vowels are like in Spanish: *a* like “rad”, *e* like “bed”, *i* like “big” but pointier, *o* like “bold” and *u* like the Spanish *u*, no 1:1 equivalent in British/American English. These are rarely written in Arabic, and don’t fully capture Egyptian pronunciation.
- There are only three double vowels, and they’re longer: *aa* (آ), *ii* (ي), and *uu* (و).

Got something else?

We’ve tried to keep this list short and only show the most relevant basic phrases for Egyptian Arabic — stuff to make you seem like a local.

If there’s something else you want us to add, please feel free to comment below!

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