CASE 1 – NOMINATIVE (SUBJECT) CASE

The nominative case is used in an Arabic sentence primarily in two situations. The first is for the subject of any sentence. That is to say, until I tell you otherwise, the subject of any sentence will always be in the nominative case.

The only other time a word will be in the nominative case is if it is the predicate of an [equational sentence](http://allthearabicyouneverlearnedthefirsttimearound.com/chapter-1/the-equational-sentence/). (See note 1 below)

The nominative case is indicated by placing a dhamma over the last letter of a word. For example, to put the word الطالب in the nominative case we will write a dhamma over the ب and get الطالبُ.

Notice that الطالبُ is [definite](http://allthearabicyouneverlearnedthefirsttimearound.com/p1/p1-ch1/the-definite-article/). When a word is in the nominative and is indefinite, we will write two dhammas over the last letter instead of one. The second dhamma is pronounced as a ن and not as a “u”. Thus “a student” is written طالبٌ and is pronounced “taalibun”. Arabic does not have an indefinite article; thus the second dhamma serves the purpose instead.

Many texts, including this one, use a modification of the two dhammas instead of writing them both. The modification consists of the first dhamma being written, but with a tail attached to it which represents the presence of the second dhamma. Our word “taalibun” would look like thisطالبٌ instead of this طالبُ

This text will use the one dhamma with a tail instead of the two dhammas.

The pronunciation of the ن sound instead of the actual sound of the second of the two case markers is called in Arabic تنوين, literally “nunation,” meaning the pronouncing of the letter ن at the end of the word. Thus “a teacher” is مُدَرِّسٌ (mudarrisun). “A book” is كتابٌ (kitaabun), and “a moron” isبَليدٌ (baliidun).

Thus the nominative case is indicated by one dhamma if a word is definite and by two dhammas if the word is indefinite. The second dhamma is pronounced as a ن and is often written as a little tail added to the first dhamma as a sort of short hand.

As I said above, in an Arabic sentence, the nominative occurs primarily in two situations. First, the subject of an Arabic sentence is in the nominative. Look at the sentence below.

الطالب جديد

In this sentence الطالبُ is the subject and it is definite. Therefore it is in the nominative case and has just one dhamma. There is no nunation since the definite article and nunation are mutually exclusive. The sentence means “The student is new.” The predicate of this sentence is جديد. Since the predicate of an equational sentence is also in the nominative case we need to put in the nominative also. Question – do we write only one dhamma, or do we write one dhamma with a tail (the equivalent of two dhammas)? We write the dhamma with a tail because جديد is indefinite. So you have الطالبُ جديدٌ.

Here are a few sentences. Write in the correct case endings and then look at the explanation below.

١.  الكتاب جديد

٢.  الطالب جميل

٣.  المدير طالب

٤.  أنتَ مدير

٥.  انا المدرس

The first three sentences all begin with a definite subject. The subject of these three should each have one dhamma. The first two sentences have an indefinite predicate which is an adjective, while the third sentence has an indefinite noun as its predicate. Remember that the predicate of an equational sentence can be either a noun or an adjective. The predicates of these three sentences will all have nunation (that is, they will have one dhamma plus the tail indicating the presence of the second dhamma), since the predicates are indefinite.

The last two sentences begin with pronouns which are themselves the subjects of those sentences. The pronouns do not have case endings. The predicates of both sentences are nouns: the first of the two is indefinite and thus has two dhammas; the second is definite and will have only one dhamma. Here are the same sentences with the case endings included.

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|   THE BOOK IS NEW. | ١.  الكتابُ جديدٌ |
|   THE STUDENT IS HANDSOME. | ٢.  الطالبُ جميلٌ |
|   THE DIRECTOR IS A STUDENT. | ٣.  المديُر طالبٌ |
|   YOU ARE A DIRECTOR. | ٤.  أنتَ مديرٌ |
|   I AM THE TEACHER. | . ٥.  انا المدرسُ |