

How to display and type Arabic characters on your computer

Disclaimer – change all your computer settings at your own risk. Installing the language files may slow down your computer's performance slightly. The instructions below are for Windows XP but other operating systems have similar options. You should be able to figure it out using these instructions and your help files.

This document helps you to setup your computer for Arabic

First, we are making sure that your computer can display Arabic.

This may involve the installation of Arabic fonts.

Next, we learn how to insert Arabic characters into documents.

If you do not type Arabic that much, this is all you need and it does not involve changing any settings on your machine.

Finally, we learn how to make your English keyboard type Arabic characters.

Again, this is not absolutely necessary.

However, it is very convenient when you need to type a lot of Arabic.

1. Displaying Arabic

First of all, you'll need to get your computer to display Arabic.

A lot of Arabic texts that you can find online is saved as an image. The advantage is that your computer won't have any trouble displaying an image file and that you will be able to read Arabic without any additional work on your part. However, images can not be edited and they also cannot be searched.

Lately more and more text is becoming available in encoded form. These character encoding schemes are created so that each Arabic character is represented by a number. The computer interprets these numbers to create to display the text. Typically, you'll need to set up your computer so it can handle these encodings because the encoding schemes for Arabic are different from the encoding traditionally used for English (ASCII).

1.1. Configuring your browser

Let's first check whether your browser (i.e. Internet Explorer) can display Arabic.

Open your browser and go to the following page:

<http://www.al-watan.com/>



This newspaper from Qatar uses a Windows operating system Arabic language encoding scheme. If you cannot read it, please follow the steps below to set up your browser. The instructions are copied straight out of Internet Explorer help files. If you see what looks like Arabic characters your browser is already setup correctly.

If you don't see what looks like Arabic text but rather a lot of strange Latin characters in the main text box, you'll need to configure your browser.

- To make sure your browser is setup to detect different encoding schemes do this:

On the **View** menu in Internet Explorer, point to **Encoding**, and then make sure **Auto-Select** has a check mark. If it doesn't, select it.

If you are prompted to download language support components, click **Download**.

If Auto-Select cannot determine the correct language encoding, and you know what language encoding it should be, you can manually select it.

To select the language encoding for a Web page

On the **View** menu, point to **Encoding**, point to **More**, and then click the appropriate language.

If you are prompted to download language support components, click **Download**.

Notes

If the Auto-Select feature or a specific language pack is not installed on your computer, Internet Explorer prompts you to download the files as needed.

- To make sure your computer has the right fonts to display Arabic do this:

Adding languages does not guarantee that your computer has a font that can display Web pages in your preferred languages. To be prompted when fonts need to be added, on the **Tools** menu, click **Internet Options**, click the **Advanced** tab, and then select the **Enable Install On Demand** check box. Or you can download a [Multilanguage support pack](#) to display pages in this language.

Go to the Al Watan newspaper again to check whether you can display it now (<http://www.al-watan.com/>). If you are still having trouble you might want to ask the Computer help desk to help you. Be sure to bring these instructions.

2. Typing Arabic

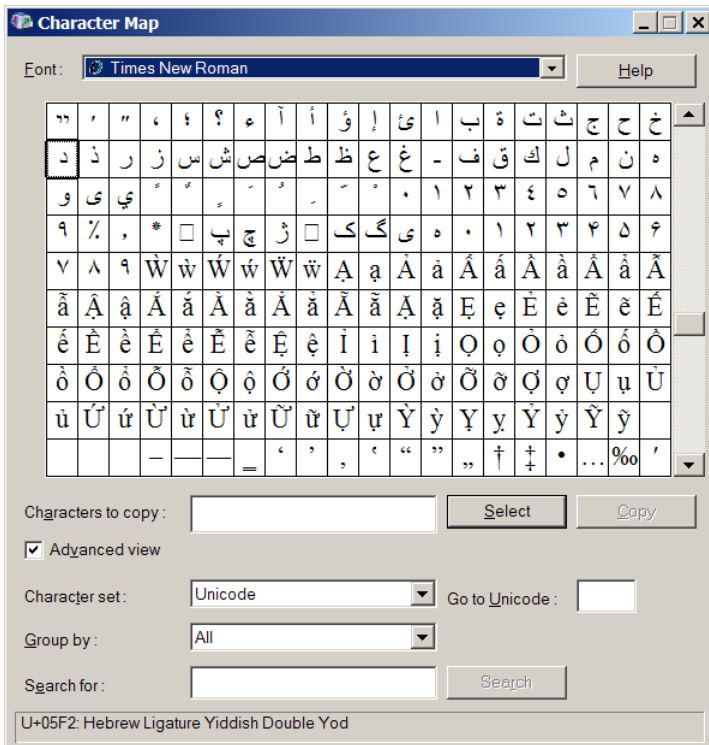
You can add a **Language Encoding** button to your toolbar to make switching between languages quicker.

2.1 Type Arabic using the Character Map program

The most basic way without doing much of anything at all is using the Character Map function in Windows. This solution works best when you do not have type that much and only need to add Arabic characters to your documents occasionally.

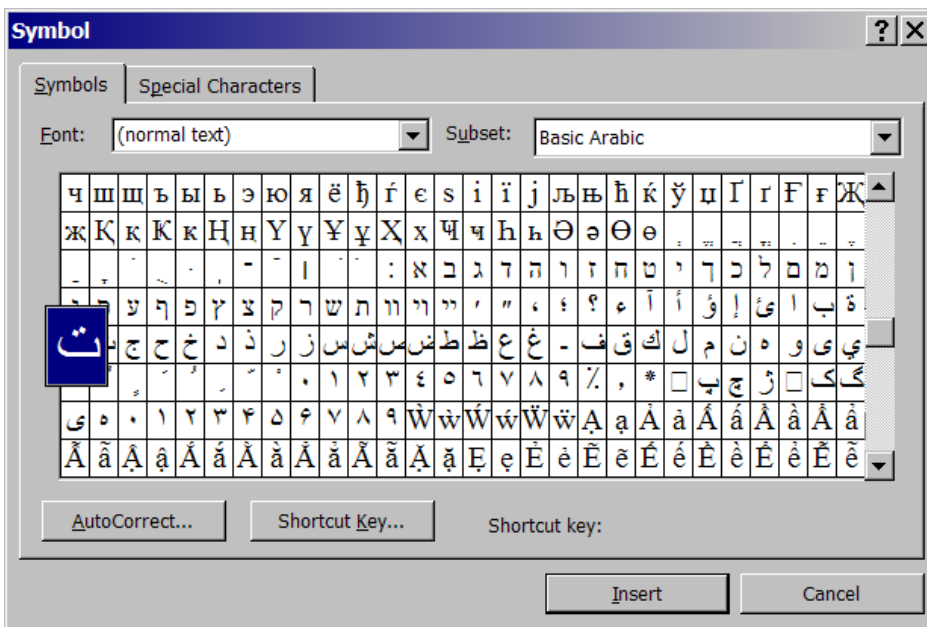
go to the start menu,
select "run"
type: "charmap" in the box¹
click "open"
scroll down to the Arabic characters
double click on the characters you need to spell your word
click "copy" when you are done
go to your document and place your cursor where you want the word to appear
press "control-v" or paste to paste your Arabic word in your document

¹ Alternatively, you can also find this program under All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Character Map.



2.2 Type Arabic in Word using insert symbol

This method is very similar to the character map discussed in the previous section. The difference is that you can stay in Word. You go to the Insert menu and click on Symbol. A window now opens that allows you to select Arabic characters.



Make sure the Font is set to (normal text). You have to scroll down to get to the Arabic characters. Select the character you want and click insert. The character will be inserted into your document directly.

2.3 Type Arabic using your regular keyboard

If you need to type a lot of Arabic you should setup your computer to do so. Although your keyboard has the regular alphabet on it you can trick the computer in believing that you are typing on an Arabic keyboard. You just have to tell the computer what keyboard you are typing on.

- First you have to give your computer the ability to type from right to left.

Go to the **Start** menu, select **Control Panel**, and then go to **Regional and Language Options**.

Click on the “languages” tab and check the box for *install files for complex script and right-to-left languages (including Thai)*

then click **apply**

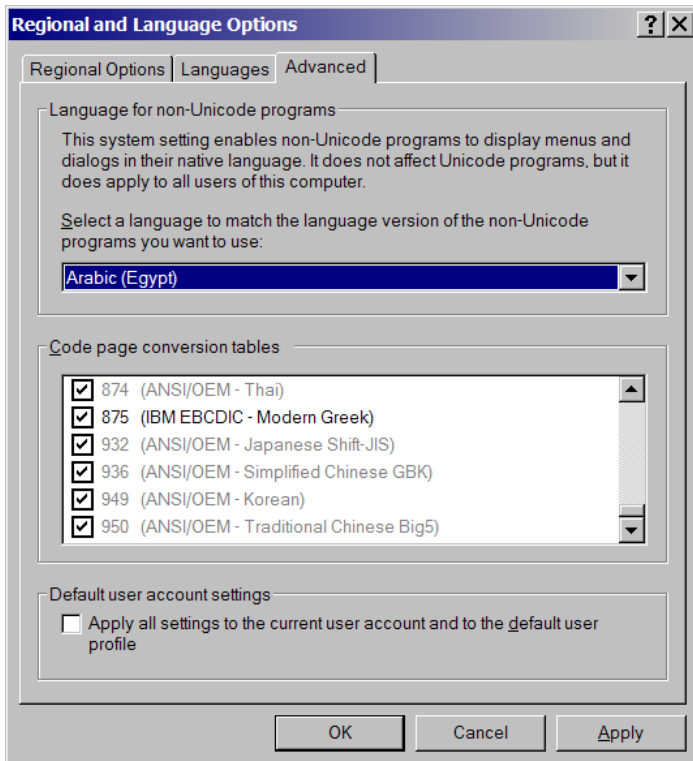
This ensures that when you type in Arabic it will be displayed correctly.

NOTE: you need to click the right justify button to get the cursor to start on the right hand side of the page!

- Next, you have to select the language you want to display

Go to the **Start** menu, select **Control Panel**, and then go to **Regional and Language Options**.

Click on the “advanced” tab and select the language in the first box. Select Arabic (Egypt). Different encoding schemes will be selected automatically in the space at the bottom of the window.

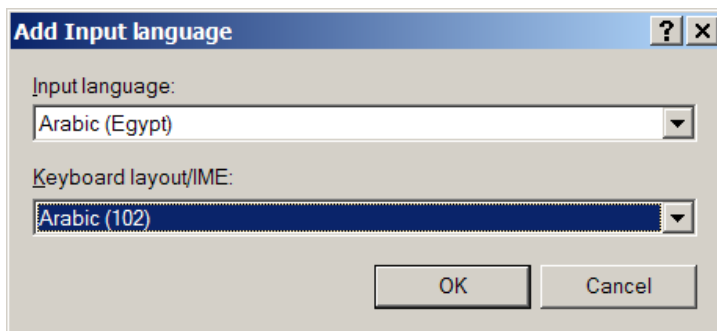


- Next, you have to select the language you want to display

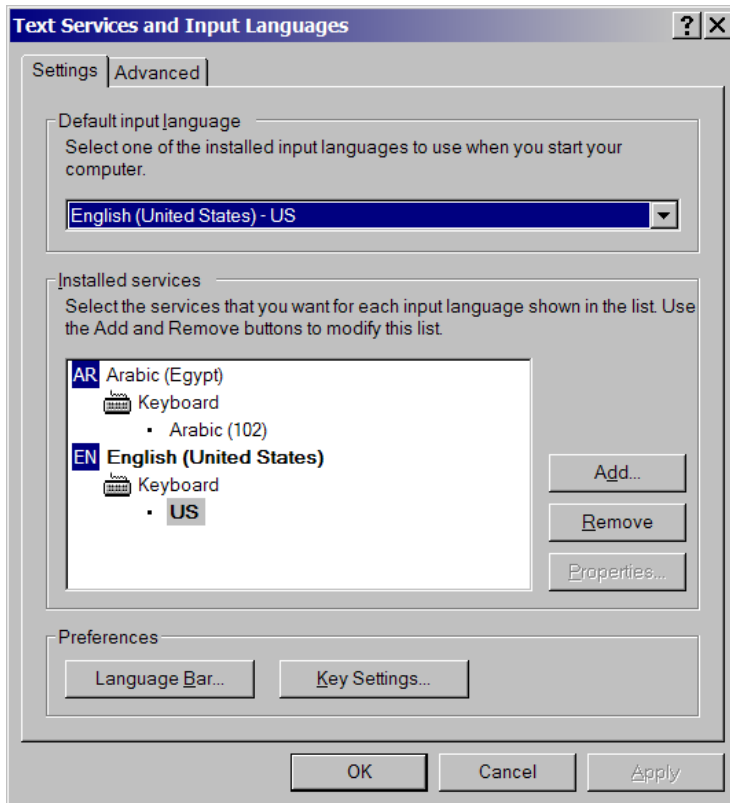
Go to the **Start** menu, select **Control Panel**, and then go to **Regional and Language Options**.

Click on the “languages” tab and then click **Details** to add different keyboard options to your computer

Click **add**, select Arabic (Egypt) as input language– most commonly used form of Arabic and select Arabic (102) as Keyboard layout.



Once you click OK your new keyboard settings for Arabic should appear in the window on the left.



2.3 Switching between keyboards

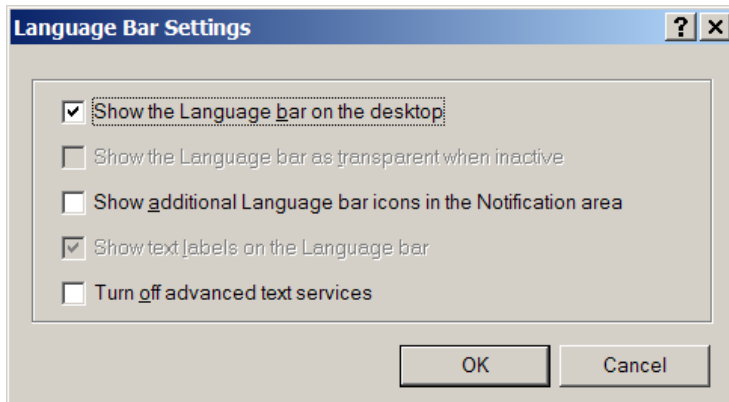
Now that you have told the computer you are typing on an Arabic keyboard, everything you type is Arabic. This is not convenient when you need to hand in papers for other classes. By adding what Microsoft calls a Language Toolbar you can switch back and forth between Arabic and English quite easily.

- To create a language toolbar

Go to the **Start** menu, select **Control Panel**, and then go to **Regional and Language Options**.

Click on the “languages” tab and then click **Details** and then click **Language Bar**.

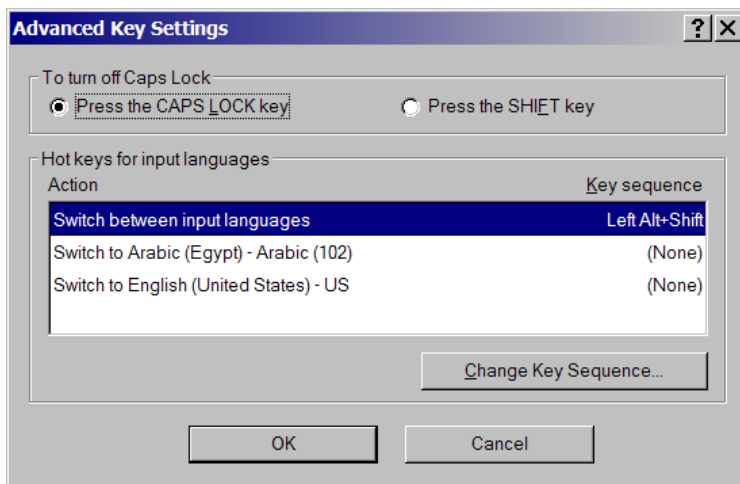
To switch between language you need to setup the language bar.



- Set keystrokes to easily switch between languages.

Go to the **Start** menu, select **Control Panel**, and then go to **Regional and Language Options**.

Click on the “languages” tab and then click **Details** and then click **Key Strokes**.



You can see that I have it set up as the default setting. When I press the left ALT key together with the shift key my keyboard effectively changes. I type English characters now and after I press alt-shift everything I type becomes شفتسلاهوؤز to switch back to English I pressed alt-shift again.

In case you are confused which language you are in you can check your toolbar where a little box should appear with either EN (English) or AR (Arabic).

In Windows 2000 you cannot set the key combination, but the default is alt-shift as well.

Now you are all set. In order to try out all your new Arabic capabilities you may have to restart your computer first.

2.4 Locating your characters

Below is an overview of the Arabic (102) keyboard layout. To help you find the characters on your English keyboard. Once you switch to the Arabic keyboard and press the f-key the Arabic character *baa* ب should appear.



You can also order key top labels to add to your keyboard (www.fingertipsoft.com). These clear labels that have Arabic characters on them. Once you stick them on your keys (they do not come off!) your keys display your regular letters plus the additional Arabic character for that key. Be sure to order the right labels (white characters for black keys and vice versa).

Enjoy!