



TEAM NISREEN'S FUSHA TO SHAMI

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Spelling etc

There are very few resources that discuss colloquial in anything other than an academic transliteration complete with intimidating dots, circumflexes and other unpleasant diacritics, and the ones that don't do that often try and adopt some kind of terrible system of representing colloquial sounds using Arabic letters and diacritics (or spell everything like fuSHa).

Both of these systems have problems – the former reflect a time when colloquial was almost never written, which thanks to social media is firmly in the past, and the latter is absolutely terrible at accurately representing the way that colloquial Arabic is actually pronounced in real life.

To try and get the best of both worlds, in this document all Arabic words and example sentences are given in both their original Arabic spelling and in a transliteration based on the *3arabiizi* occasionally used by native speakers to write Arabic when support for letters is not conveniently available. This has the downside of involving quite a lot of capital letters and numbers where an English speaker definitely doesn't expect them to be.

Because spelling is not standardised, colloquial words can be written in a variety of different ways ranging from slightly modified fuSHa (قائل or even قائل for *2aayel*) to the very phonetic (ثائل) to the unpredictable and weird (كون for *-kon*). Most speakers lean towards modified fuSHa spelling which reflects the usual pronunciation of those letters, alongside some odd conventions and phonetic spellings, which appear particularly in function words, suffixes etc. I've kept the sentences here mostly as they were where I found them, but I've got rid of some of the more bizarre spellings.

One particularly weird thing I have got rid of which you might encounter in real life is that in Syrian text-speak, ال 'the' is often not written at all. When it is written it is sometimes separated from the word it's attached to: بال بيت *bélbeet* 'at home', هال بيت *halbeet* 'this house'. Even more weirdly, these 'separated' forms are sometimes written *alongside* ال البيت: هال البيت. I can't explain this, but I can warn you to watch out for it since it's very counterintuitive.

Consonants

Most of the Arabic consonants are pronounced basically the same in Shami as in newsreader-style MSA, but just to showcase the transliteration we'll list them all here;

ب *b*

ت *t*

خ *kh*

د *d*

ر *r*

ز *z*

س *s*

ش *sh*

ع *3*

غ *gh*

ف *f*

ك *k*

م *m*

ن *n*

ه *h*

و *w* (when a consonant)

ي *y* (when a consonant)

You should be aware of the following sounds:

ث – usually transliterated and pronounced as *s* in more common words.

In [higher-register](#) words like ثقافة *saqaafe* ‘culture’ or ثورة *sawra* ‘revolution’ some speakers may have *th* (as in English **thin**) as in fuSHa. This seems to be more common in southern Levantine than in northern Levantine – many Syrians cannot pronounce ث consistently as *th* and even when reading fuSHa will pronounce it as *s*.

Note that a lot of common words which have ث in fuSHa have a ت *t* instead in colloquial: ثلاثة *tlaate* ‘three’, تنتين *tneen* ‘two’, بعث *ba3at* ‘he sent’ – but this is not a rule you can generalise to just any word (حديث *7adiis* ‘conversation’).

ذ - usually transliterated and pronounced as *z* in more common words.

In [higher-register](#) words like ذهب *zahab* ‘to go’ some speakers may have dh (as in English **that**) as in fuSHa. This seems to be more common in southern Levantine than in northern Levantine – many Syrians cannot pronounce ذ consistently as dh and even when reading fuSHa will pronounce it as *z*.

As with ث, a lot of common words which have ذ in fuSHa have a د *d* instead in colloquial: ذاق *daa2* ‘he tasted’, داب *daab* ‘it melted’, بولاد *buulaad* ‘steel’. This is not a rule you can generalise to all words however (ذوق *zoo2* ‘taste’, حبذ *7abbaz* ‘he was in favour of’).

ح 7 – Generally pronounced as in fuSHa, but in Syrian is sometimes not pronounced word- finally in a few common words like صحي *Sa7ii*.

ج *j* – generally pronounced as in English pleasure in northern Levantine and as in English jam in southern Levantine (although in southern Levantine both pronunciations occur).

J has a tendency to get confused with sounds produced in the same area of the mouth, and in a few common words like تجوز *tjawwaz* ‘get married’ and سداجة *saddaaje* ‘carpet’ it has switched places with other sounds, producing jumbled-up versions of the fuSHa equivalents.

ض *D* – in Levantine this is the emphatic equivalent of ذ, pronounced velarised (with the back of your tongue raised). This is probably the pronunciation you were taught in fuSHa, but if your teacher was Iraqi you may have learnt to pronounce it as an emphatic version of ذ *dh* instead.

Note that there are a few words which have ض in fuSHa which have an emphatic Z (ظ) in colloquial, at least for some speakers: ظابط *ZaabeT* ‘officer’, بالضبط *biZZab@T* ‘exactly’.

Especially in Lebanese but to some extent elsewhere, some words with ض may actually be pronounced ذ.

ص *S* and ط *T* – Pronounced as in fuSHa with the back of the tongue raised. As with *D* these sounds are a bit confused with س and ت and some words appear with both in different areas or by different people (سفت *saffaT/saffat* ‘line up’, فقس *fa2aS/fa2as* ‘hatch’). The most common word like this is صدق *sadda2* ‘believe’, which is usually spelt as in fuSHa but pronounced with a normal *s*.

Z – depending on who taught you, you may have learnt the Levantine pronunciation in fuSHa – that is, as an emphatic version of *z*. If, however, you learnt this sound as an emphatic version of ذ – a more prestigious fuSHa pronunciation – you should change it to *Z* in Levantine.

There are a number of words with ظ in fuSHa which instead have ض in Levantine: *ظل Dall* ‘he stayed’, *الظهر éDDahr* ‘noon’, *صفر Défr* ‘fingernail’. But this is not a rule that can be generalised to all words: *الظاهر éZZaaher* ‘it seems’, *ظريف Zariif* ‘nice’.

ق q – Probably the most well-known ‘transformation’ from fuSHa to colloquial is the change of *q* to a glottal stop ʔ. Generally speaking, most more colloquial words undergo this change: *بقي bé2i* ‘it remained’, *دق daa2* ‘he tasted’, *قال 2aal* ‘he said’.

However, many words – especially higher-register ones – retain their *q* sound: *ثقافة saqaafe* ‘culture’, *مقالة maqaale* ‘article’. There are some more common words that typically retain ق too: *wéqe7* ‘rude’. (In Lebanese all *q* can become a glottal stop, however).

The glottal stop pronunciation is probably the most sensible for non-native speakers to adopt in any country. Although regional dialects exist which have *q*, *g*, or even *k* instead of a glottal stop, they are relatively marked. The one exception to this might be Jordan, where men studying Arabic might be expected to use *g* in at least some situations ([here](#) is an article discussing the complexity of the situation in Jordan).

ل l – Generally pronounced as in fuSHa. In a few words, particularly *الله* and its derivations, *l* is pronounced emphatic/velarised (with the back of the tongue raised).

ء 2 – Pronounced as in fuSHa as a glottal stop. However, most *fuSHa* hamzas have no equivalent in colloquial, being dropped and replaced by vowel lengthening or just going missing entirely.

Where the hamza appears in fuSHa conjugation patterns as a stand-in for vowels, they tend to be replaced by semivowels consistently, as in the active participle pattern *faa2il* (for hollow verbs), which in colloquial is replaced by *faayil*: *دايق daaye2* ‘having tasted’, *سايق saaye2* ‘driving’.

Initial consonant clusters

Shami allows lots of consonant clusters that fuSHa does not, especially word initially (where fuSHa has none):

كلاب klaab ‘dogs’

صحون SHuun ‘dishes’

صغار Sghaar ‘little kids’

ضروب Droob ‘hit (it)’

It is often the case in common words (and patterns) that where fusha has an *a-* prefix or an unstressed short *i/u* in the first syllable, this will be dropped if it results in a cluster of only two consonants (so *أولاد* becomes *wlaad*, *حدود* becomes *7duud* etc). But this is again not a generalisable rule to all words and you should be careful not to over-Shamify higher register words!

Vowels

The actual exact pronunciation of the vowels in Levantine is, as in English, one of the many indicators of regional dialect. The most important thing for an initial learner is trying to approximate the sounds and keep the various different vowels distinct. You can worry about getting them closer to native pronunciation later when you have people to imitate.

Length

One of the most important things to worry about is length – you have to make your long vowels longer than your short vowels. The five long vowels are *aa ii uu ee oo* (*ee* and *oo* correspond to *ay* and *aw* in fuSHa and probably sound to you, if you are a native English speaker, like the vowels in ‘late’ and ‘wrote’ and should not be confused with our vowels in ‘beet’ and ‘boot’).

كاتب *kaatab* ‘he wrote to’ and كتب *katab* ‘he wrote’ are distinct from one another.

مين *miin* ‘who’ and من *min* ‘from’ are distinct from one another.

دوق *duu2* ‘taste (it)!’ and دق *du2(2)* ‘hit (it)!’ are distinct from one another.

In fuSHa, there are almost no long final vowels that are not followed by a consonant. If you’re pronouncing fuSHa right, then شهداء *shuhadaa2* should have a long vowel in its last syllable, but ذكري *dhikra*, despite being written with one, has a final short vowel (unless you learnt Tajwiid or something, in which case good for you). The only exception is in words like مباراة *mubaaraa(h)* where there is a final *taa marbuuTa* that is not pronounced. This is mostly the same in Levantine, with one exception: when we attach the pronoun هـ ‘he’ to a final vowel, that vowel is lengthened and the *-h* is dropped.

درسي *drési* ‘study!’ is distinct from درسيه *drésii* ‘study it!’

مصري *maSaari* ‘money’ is distinct from مصاريه *maSaarii* ‘his money’.

Finally, in Palestinian and Jordanian, long vowels which are not stressed are usually shortened: مفاتيح *mafatii7* ‘keys’ (not *mafaatii7* as in Syrian and as the spelling suggests).

Short vowel é

In Palestinian and Jordanian, short u/i are distinct at all times. In Syrian and Lebanese, however, short u/i/o/e do not commonly occur in stressed syllables, merging into a sound we write with *é* (بدرس *bédros* ‘I study’, كتبو *ktébu* ‘write!’, شغل *shégh@l* ‘work’). This sound also occurs in some unstressed syllables (قدام *2édzaam* ‘in front of’).

This sound is pronounced in a variety of ways depending quite predictably on the sounds around it. The two most common realisations in Damascene are as what is called in linguistics a schwa (approximately the central-ish vowel sound in English ‘but’) and as a kind of short i (similar to in English ‘pit’). This means that كنت ‘I was’ sounds like *kint*, whilst حط ‘put (it)’ sounds sort of like English ‘hut’.

Note that this sound is being replaced in some words by its higher-register (fuSHa) equivalent. حب for example (‘love’) is pronounced both 7ébb and 7ubb.

Helping vowel @

Whilst initially Shami allows lots of consonant clusters, finally and across word boundaries it is less keen on them and usually breaks them up with a helping vowel @. This vowel cannot be stressed and the word takes stress as though it wasn’t there (تعلمت t3allam@t ‘I learnt’, مشمشه mésh@mshe ‘apricot’). Exactly which final consonant clusters are broken up depends on the speaker and the dialect, but here are some examples:

فيلم fil@m ‘film’

كنت kén@t ‘I was’

بحر ba7@r ‘sea’

In Syrian and Lebanese this vowel is pronounced exactly like é. In Palestinian and Jordanian, where there is no é vowel, it is pronounced differently depending on the real (non-epenthetic) vowel before it. In verbs it is always e, but in nouns it is typically e after a i e and o after o u:

فلم filem ‘film’

كنت kunet ‘I was’

عذر 3uzor ‘excuse’

The helping vowel is typically inserted into final consonant clusters when they appear before a pause or if the next word begins with a consonant which creates an unpleasant consonant cluster:

الفيلم يلي شفتو élfil@m yalli shéfto ‘the film I saw’

رحت لعندو ré7@t la3éndo ‘I went to his house’

اي اخدت دوى؟ اي اخدت akhad@t dawa? ee akhad@t ‘have you had some medicine? Yeah, I have

It can also be inserted in between words. This typically happens if the next word begins with a consonant cluster itself:

انبسطت كثير mbasaTT @ktiir ‘I had a really good time’

كنت اشتريت ként @shtareet ‘I had bought’

Vowel dropping

Unstressed o e i u in a final syllable are usually dropped when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added:

كاتب كاتبة كاتبين *kaateb, kaatb-e, kaatb-iin* ‘writer, writers’

شرب, شربت, شربو *shéreb, shérb-et, shérb-u* ‘he drank’, ‘she drank’, ‘they drank’

قالت, قالتك *2aalet, 2aalt-élkon* ‘she said’, ‘she said to you’

Unstressed *a* is not normally dropped, except when the third person singular feminine suffix *-et, -at* is added:

كتبت, كتبو *katb-et/katb-at, katab-u* ‘she wrote’, ‘they wrote’

Vowel dropping can also occur across word boundaries when words are pronounced as part of a tight unit

شافت الفيلم *shaaf(e)t élfilm* ‘she saw the film’

مدرسة محمد *madras(e)t @m7ammad* ‘Muhammad’s school’

Vowel shifting

Adding some suffixes results in a stress shift (according to the regular rules of stress). If this results in an unstressed *e o i u* becoming stressed, in Syr/Leb it changes into an *é*:

بيكتب بيكتبك *byéktob, byékt**é**blak* ‘he writes’, ‘he writes for you’

بتمسكها *btémsek, btém**sé**kha* ‘you grab, you grab it’

When the *-l-* suffixes are added to a hollow verb, its long vowel is shortened. If the long vowel is *ii* or *uu*, then in Syr/Leb it is shortened to *é*:

يقول, يقلك *bi2uul, bi2**é**llak* ‘he says’, ‘he says to you’

When suffixes are added to nouns and adjectives ending in *-i*, it never drops (as in fuSHa ماشي ماشون *maashi maashuun* for example). Where the suffix is a *nisba* adjective suffix, it becomes *-iyy-*:

حلبية *7alabi, 7alabiyy-e* ‘Aleppan’, ‘Aleppans’

In most other cases it becomes *-y-*:

ماشي ماشيين *maashi, maashyiin* ‘walking’

مستوي *méstewi, mést**é**wye* ‘cooked’

There are a few exceptions, however, like form I defective passive participles:

مطفي, مطفية *méTfi, méTfiyye* ‘switched off’

Stress

The stress system of Levantine is pretty similar to the one usually taught as the standard for fuSHa, with a few exceptions.

The placement of the stress depends on the ‘weight’ of the syllable. A syllable consisting of just a consonant and a short vowel (like daras, katab etc) is ‘light’. A syllable consisting of a consonant-short vowel-consonant sequence (like daras, katab) is ‘heavy’. Any other syllable is considered ~super-heavy~. These syllables are either a consonant followed by a long vowel (maashi, waraa), a consonant followed by a vowel and then a consonant cluster (kalb, khawwaftni) or, more unusually, a combination of the two (Zaasse).

The rule is basically that if the final syllable of the word is super-heavy, then that takes the stress:

وراء waraa ‘behind him’
شايقتيه؟ shaayéftii? ‘do you see him?’

If not, then if the second-to-last syllable of the word is heavy or super-heavy, then that takes the stress:

مدارس madaares ‘school’
درستو darasto ‘you studied it’

If not, then the third-to-last syllable automatically takes stress regardless of its weight.

درسو daraso ‘he studied it’
طلبة Talabe ‘students’

Note that the helping vowel is ignored when deciding where stress goes:

خوفتني khawwaf@tni ‘you scared me’
اخذتنا akhad@tni ‘you took me’

Since *é* and *@* are pronounced the same, pairs like the following are only distinguished by stress:

درستني darrasétni ‘she taught me’
درستني darras@tni ‘you taught me’

There are a few exceptions, mainly form VII verbs and related forms, where stress is not predictable in Syrian. In other dialects these forms are regularised:

بيشتغل byésh^{té}ghel ‘he works’ (Pal. bishtghel)
مونتدا muntada ‘conference’

Pronouns, ‘here’, ‘there’ etc

Independent personal pronouns

The independent (منفصل) pronouns in Shami are as follows:

انا *ana*

انت *inta/inte*

انتني *inti*

هو *huwwe*

هي *hiyye*

احنا, نحنا *ni7na, i7na*

انتو *intu*

هنن, هنه, هن, هم, همه *hinnen, hinne, hin, hum, humme*

As you can see, most of the forms are pretty close to fuSHa. There are no dual pronouns and no plural feminine – the form *hin(ne)* is simply plural despite its similarity to the fuSHa feminine plural. The forms *i7na*, *hum* and *humme* are only used in Jor/Pal. Jordanian does not have the forms *hinnen*, *hinne*, *hin*, but Palestinian does.

Object pronouns

The object pronouns are pretty similar to fuSHa, especially if you’ve been taught the less literary variants used in many readings of MSA. They are also almost identical to the possessive pronouns:

ana: -ni

inte: -ak/k

inti: -ek/ki

huwwe: -o/h

hiyye: -(h)a

ni7na: -na

intu: -kon, -kum

hinne/hum: -(h)on, -hom

The forms *-hom* and *-kum* are only used in Jor/Pal, whilst *-hon* and *-kon* are not used in Jordanian. In Syr/Leb, *-ha* and *-hon* often lose their h.

-ak/k, *-ek/ki* and *-o/h* are found in all regions, but have two forms depending on what they are attached to. The first form is used following a consonant: تركتك تركتك تركتك *tarakt-ak tarakt-ek tarakt-o*. The second form is used following a vowel: بينساك بينساكي بينساه *byénsaak byénsaaki byénsaa(h)*. *-h* is not pronounced as an h, but has the effect of lengthening the final vowel of

the word and shifting the stress: *byénsa* ‘he forgets’ is pronounced with the stress on the first syllable, whilst *byénsaa* ‘he forgets it’ is stressed on the second syllable.

When suffixes beginning with vowels are added to a verbal form, they can trigger the expected vowel dropping:

بتشربو *btéshrbo* ‘you drink it’

ضاربو *Daarbo* ‘I’ve hit it’

Pronoun suffix and *la-*

Sometimes rather than just using a straightforward verb plus noun an object pronoun attaches to the verb and the object will instead follow *la-*:

ضربتو لاهمد *Darabto la-2a7mad*

This can even happen when the direct object is a pronoun:

ضربتو لالو *Darabto la-2élo* (or just *élo*)

This construction is sometimes used for emphasis, especially when the object is a pronoun, but often there is no clear reason why it is used as opposed to a simple direct object construction.

The *-la-* object pronouns

Completely unlike fuSHa, colloquial has a second set of suffixes derived from ل ‘to’ which regularly appear attached to verbs and certain other expressions, usually in the meaning of ‘to’ or ‘for’:

ana: -li/élli

inte: -lak/éllak

inti: -lek/éllek

huwwe: -lo/élo

hiyye: -élha, élla

ni7na: -élna

intu: -élkon, -ilkom

hinne, hum: -éllon, élhon, ilhom

The first four pronouns have alternative forms in -éll- which appear after consonant clusters: *tarakt-éllak* تركتك but *tarak-lak* تراكك. When these four appear with hollow verbs, they (unlike normal object pronouns) cause a shortening of the long vowel:

ykuun-lak > *ykén-lak*

bjiib-lak > *bjéb-lak biira* ‘I’ll get you a beer’

The usage of these pronouns is very wide but it is basically analogous to the additional objects we see in English expressions like ‘I got you a present’ or ‘I told you a story’ or,

when the person it references is the same as the subject, as in expressions like ‘get you a guy who can do both’. There are also a large number of verbs (like *2aal* ‘say’, *da22* ‘ring’ etc) which typically take objects with *la-* when they are nouns but take these pronominal forms when they are pronouns.

The carrier yaa-

As in modern fuSHa it is impossible for a verb to carry two object suffixes at a time. When two object pronouns occur with the same verb, one of them must be carried by a ‘holder’, *yaa-* (clearly derived from إياه in fuSHa):

عطيني ياه *3aTiini yaa* ‘give me it’

عطيتو ياه *3aTeeto yaaha* ‘I gave him it’

This is also used to carry object pronouns for a range of ‘semi-verbal’ constructions, most commonly بدي *béddi yaaha* ‘I want it’

بدي ياه *béddi yaaha* ‘I want it’

The *-l-* series of pronouns can also not, in Shami, coexist with object pronouns. Adding an *-l-* pronoun to a verb with a direct object pronoun forces the direct object off onto *yaa-*:

يا ريت تشفلي ياه *yaa reet tshéf-li yaa* ‘could you please have a look at it for me?’

The *yaa* forms are also used in conjunction with *w-* when coordinating *pronouns*:

انا وياك *ménruu7 ana wiyyaak* ‘you and me will go’

انا وياها *ana wiyyaaha* ‘me and her’

Possessive pronouns

As well as being placed in iDaafe with other nouns, nouns can take possessive pronoun suffixes which attach directly to the end of the word. The suffixes are as follows:

ana: -i/yi

inte: -ak/k

inti: -ek/ki

huwwe: -o/h

hiyye: -(h)a

ni7na: -na

intu: -kon, -kum

hinne/hum: -(h)on, -hum

-hum and *-kum* are Jor/Pal, *-(h)on* and *-kon* are found everywhere except Jordan but are more common in Syr/Leb. The forms *-i*, *-ak*, *-ek*, *-o* are attached to nouns ending in consonants; *-yi*, *-k*, *-ki* and *-h* to nouns ending in vowels:

كلبي كلبك كلبك كلبو *kalbi kalbak kalbek kalbo* ‘my, your, your, his dog’

مصارِيي, مصاريك, مصاريكي, مصاريه *maSaariyyi, maSaariik, maSaariiki, maSaarii* ‘my, your, your, his money’

The forms *-(h)a* *-(h)on* usually drop the initial *h*. This usually does not affect the stress (the word is still stressed as though the *h* were still there) but for many Syrians it does:

ريحتها *rīi7ét-ha, rīi7ét-a, rīi7t-a* ‘her smell’

When a suffix beginning with a consonant is attached to the *é*, it is stressed and becomes *–ét*:

دفعتكون *daf3ét-kon* ‘your payment’

When suffixes beginning with vowels are added to any noun, they trigger the usual vowel dropping:

مشيته *mashito* < *mashyet-o* ‘his walk’

كاتبو *kaatbo* ‘its writer’

Double object construction

As with the objects of verbs, speakers often use a ‘double possessive’ where a pronoun appears on the possessed noun and the possessor is then preceded by *la-*. This seems to happen particularly frequently with personal relationships but also appears elsewhere. It is important not to mistake these constructions for two separate elements of the sentence (‘her brother, to Nisreen’ rather than Nisreen’s brother):

اخو لنسرين *akhuwwa la-nisriin* – Nisreen’s brother

رفيقو لمجيد *rfii2o la-majiid* – Majeed’s friend

Demonstrative pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns have a lot of regional variation. Here we will list only a few very common variants:

هاد هادا هيدا *haad haada heeda* – this (masc)

هي هادي هيدي *hey y haadi heedi* – this (fem)

هدول هول *hadool hool* – these (pl)

هداك *hadaak* – that (masc)

هديك *hadiik* – that (fem)

هدولاك هدولييك *hadolaak hadooliik* – those (pl)

The *hee-* forms and *hool* are Lebanese. *Hadooiliik* is Leb/Syr, *hadolaak* Jor/Pal. All of these forms can be used on their own (meaning ‘this one’, ‘that one’ etc). They can also appear before definite nouns:

هيا الفكرة *hayy élfékra* – this idea

In this position they can be contracted into *ha-*, which can stand in for all of them and can only appear with nouns:

هالبيت *halbeet* ‘this house’

هالزلمة *hazzalame* ‘this guy’

Note that whilst *hal* is obviously a contraction of *ha-* and the definite article *l-*, in Syrian it can prefix to things that *él-* cannot, particularly *iDaafe* constructions:

هالبيت المخدة *halbeet lémkhadde* ‘this pillowcase’ (< *beet mkhadde*)

Using the full forms allows for emphasis and contrasting of different things, neither of which are possible with *ha-*. In the opposite direction, *ha-* sometimes carries additional nuance that the full forms do not. You don’t need to worry about this for now, though.

Here and there

The most common forms are:

هون *hoon* – here

هناك *hunaak huniik~hniik* – there

Huniik is Leb/Syr, *hunaak* Jor/Pal. Note that whereas English ‘here’ and ‘there’ can also express motion to somewhere (‘go there’, ‘come here’) in Arabic these require the preposition *la-* (روح لهنك *ruu7la-hniik*, تعال لهن *ta3aal la-hoon*).

Question words

Who, what, which

شو, ايش *shu, eesh* ‘what’

مين *miin* ‘who’

Shu is used in all dialects. *Eesh* is largely Southern Levantine.

اي اية, انو اني *eyy eyyet; anu ani* ‘which’

Anu and *ani* are originally (and in some dialects) masculine and feminine, but in Damascene are used freely for both genders. Whilst *eyy* can be used to mean ‘any’, *anu/ani* can only be used to mean ‘which’.

Anu and *ani* can stand alone in the meaning ‘which one’, which *eyy/eyyet* cannot. However, all of these forms are usually, but not always, followed by *waa7ed* or *waa7de* in the meaning ‘which (one)’ (*anu waa7ed*, *ani waa7de* etc):

اني واحد بذك؟
ani waa7ed béddak?
which one do you want?

Prepositions referring to question words move to the beginning of the sentence rather than staying in place like in English:

لمين الجزدان؟
lamiin éjjézjdaan
whose is the purse?

عن شو عم تحكي؟
3an shu 3am té7ki?
what are you talking about?

على شو عم تدور؟
3ala shu 3am @tdawwer?
what are you looking for?

How much, how many, how long etc

كام *kam* ‘how many’

قديش *2addeesh* ‘how many, how much, how long’

Kam is used with a following singular noun to mean ‘how many’:

كام ليرة؟
kam leera?
how many lira?

كام شخص؟
kam shakh@S?
how many people?

2addeesh usually (but not always) means ‘how much’:

بقديش الجزدان؟
b2addeesh éjjézdaan?
how much is the purse?

Note that قديش is also the normal, idiomatic way of requesting any answer which contains a number, even in cases where in English we usually use ‘what’:

قديش مو اليديك؟

2addeesh mawaaliidak?

what year were you born in?

قديش رقم تليفونك؟

2addeesh ra2@m telefoonak?

what's your phone number?

Where, how

وين *ween* 'where', منين *mneen* 'from where'

كيف, شلون *kiif, shloon* 'how'

Kiif is used everywhere. *Shloon* (originally a contraction of *shu loon* 'what is the colour of') is only used in Syria. Despite its origins, *shloon* is an all-purpose word for 'how':

شلون بدني افتح الباب؟

shloon béddi éfta7 élbaab?

how am I supposed to open the door?

Ween, *kiif* and *shloon* all very commonly take pronoun suffixes: *weenak* 'where are you', *kiifak* 'how are you', *shloonak* 'how are you'.

Why

ليش, ليه *leesh, leeh* 'why'

Leesh is the more common form (probably from *la-eesh* originally).

When

ايمت ايمتي *eemat eemta* 'when'

اي ساعة *eyy saa3a* 'at what time'

These can be combined with prepositions:

لايمتي رح نضل هييك؟

la2eemta ra7 @nDéll heek

how long are we going to stay like this?

Heek

The form *heek* (not exactly a pronoun but in that general area) has a variety of meanings. On its own it typically means 'in that way', 'in this way', etc. It is essentially the equivalent of *fuSHa* هكذا in this sense:

ليش؟ هيك

leesh? Heek

Why? – Just because.

نحننا هيك

né7na heek

That's just how we are.

بالمنااسبة مين هيك بيتغالظ؟

bilmunaasabe miin heek byétghaalaZ?

And by the way – who [else] is rude like this?

تاغ لحدنا بتحسو هيك

taag la7ada bét7éssso heek

Tag someone you think is like this

رفاع ايديك هيك

rfaa3 iidak heek

Lift up your hand like this¹

It also appears in comparisons meaning 'that' (generically, referring for example to a situation):

ولا احلى من هيك

wala 2a7la mén heek

There's nothing nicer than that!

It also commonly appears in tag questions:

رحت امبارح مو هيك؟

ré7t @mbaare7 muu heek?

You went yesterday, didn't you?

It also appears in the set phrases لهيك *laheek* and مشان هيك *mishaan heek* 'thus, so, for that reason' and مع هيك *ma3 heek* 'nonetheless'.

It can also appear in front of nouns meaning 'such (a)', etc.:²

مين بحاجة هيك شي؟

miin b7aajet heek shi?

Who needs something like this?

Someone, anyone; somewhere, anywhere etc

Generally the 'some' and 'any' element here is expressed with شي *shi* used as a kind of indefinite article which also appears with other nouns (i.e. there are no dedicated words for this purpose):

¹ In Jordanian you will hear *zayy heek*, but this does not exist in other dialects.

² You hear this sometimes in MSA – هكذا مشاكل – for example – but this is probably actually a borrowed structure from colloquial rather than the other way around as the fuSHa structure is a recent innovation.

إذا شئ مرة حبيت تلعب معي
iza shi marra 7abbeet tél3ab ma3i
if sometime you want to play with me

بشي مكان *bshi makaan* – someplace, somewhere

The only major exception is *7ada* ‘someone’, ‘anyone’, which is always singular masculine:

حدا بيحكي انكليزي؟
7ada byé7ki ingliizi?
does anyone speak English?

ما شفت حدا
maa shéf@t 7ada
you didn’t see anyone

When it is the subject it is negated by *ما*:

ما حدا شافني
maa 7ada shaafni
nobody saw me

In certain limited circumstances *مين* can also appear in a similar meaning:

عندي مين يساعدي
3éndi miin ysaa3édni
I have (someone, people etc) who can help me

في مين غيرك يحكي عنو
fii miin gheerak yé7ki 3anno
there are people other than you who can speak for him

Nouns

Gender

Nouns can be either masculine or feminine. In the singular, most feminine nouns are distinguished by the presence of a ة (a *taa marbuuTa*), as in fuSHa. Unlike fuSHa, this is pronounced as *-a* or *-e* depending on the preceding sound: generally, it is *-a* after ط ص ض ظ but *-e* after other consonants:

دبوبة *dabduube* ‘teddy-bear’

محكية *mé7kiyye* ‘spoken’

ملعونة *mal3uune* ‘naughty’

بوسة *boose* ‘kiss’

طريقة *Tarii2a* ‘way’

بيضة *beeDa* ‘egg’

شوشرة *shooshara* ‘fuss’

بطة *baTTa* ‘duck’

There are a few exceptions to this rule, almost all of them with r: ابرة *ibre* ‘needle’ (also *ibra*), شفرة *shafre* ‘razor’ and, usually, adjectives ending in *-iir*: كبيرة *kbiire*, صغيرة *Sghiire*. These have to be learnt.

There is one other common feminine endings, invariable *-a*, which is found in words like ذكرى *zikra* ‘memory’ and the feminine of colours (بيضا *beeDa*) and nouns of ‘defect’ (هبل *habla* ‘idiot’). A few words with this ending, like شتى *shita* ‘winter’ and دنيا *dunya* world, are usually pronounced with final *-e* in Damascene (*shéte, dénye*). Unlike in MSA, many nouns that have final *-a* as a realisation of a final root vowel (like معنى *ma3na* ‘meaning’, مستشفى *mustashfa* ‘hospital’) are treated as feminine at least some of the time.

As in MSA, there are a number of words with no ة which are nonetheless feminine, but these words are not necessarily the same ones as in MSA (and vary by dialect – شاي is feminine for some people but not others for example). This includes most place names, letters of the alphabet, body parts, and the following common exceptions:

أرض *arD* ‘earth’

بلد *balad* ‘town, country’

بلاد *blaad* ‘country’

حرب *7arb* ‘war’

مي *mayy* ‘water’

سما *sama* ‘sky’

سكين *sékkiin* (also *sékkiine*) ‘knife’

دكان *dékkaan* (also *dékkaane*) ‘shop, stall’

شمس *shams* ‘sun’

Definiteness

The definite article is (@)l- (Syr/Leb) or (i)l- (Jor/Pal) before single consonants. The initial vowel often drops, especially after other vowels:

البسة *él-bisse* ‘the cat’

بالبيت *bi-l-beet* ‘in the house’

As in fuSHa the *l* of the article assimilates to [sun letters](#). The only difference is that ج *j* is (optionally) a sun letter in Shami:

الجو *éjjoww* ‘the weather’

Before consonant clusters, the article is *lé/li*:

الكتاب *lé-ktaab* ‘the book’

الكبير *lé-kbiir* ‘the big one’

As in fuSHa, the definite is used for both specific things that the speaker and the listener are expected to understand the reference of (i.e. the way it is used in English) and for generics, languages, some countries etc. The definite plural or singular are often used to make generalisations, sometimes causing ambiguities:

السوري شغيل

éssuuri shéghhiil

the Syrian is hardworking/Syrians are hardworking

بحب الكتب

b7ébb élkétob

I love books/I love the books

There are a few verbs/expressions however which always take indefinite objects where we would expect the definite, unlike fuSHa:

بحكي عربي

bé7ki 3arabi

I speak Arabic (not العربي)

هاد اسمو شغل

haad ésmo shég hl

this is what work is [= this thing's name is work, this is called work]

خلصت قراءة

khallaSt @2raaye

I've finished reading

The dual

The dual is invariably formed with *-een* (there is no case variation):

كليين *kalbeen* 'two dogs'

كاتيين *kaatbeen* 'two writers'

On feminine nouns with تاء مربوطة the suffix becomes *-t*:

مرتين *marteen* 'two women'

حبنتين *7abbteen* 'two pills'

Unlike in fuSHa, the suffix does not drop its *n* in *iDaafe*, and is rarely used with pronoun suffixes. Certain body parts that come in twos have what appears to be a dual suffix: *éjreen* 'legs', *réjleen*, 'legs', *3eeneen* 'eyes'. But this suffix acts differently. It *does* drop its *-n* in *iDaafe* and is often followed by pronoun suffixes, and is the normal way to express 'someone's Xes':

رجلي *réjleyyi* 'my legs'

ايدي *iideyyi* 'my arms'

These nouns also have a proper dual with *-t-* inserted which does not drop the *n*:

عينتين *3eenteen* 'two eyes'

رجلتين *réj@lteen* 'two legs'

Also unlike in fuSHa, the dual is not compulsory whenever two of a noun is meant and the plural can be freely used in these circumstances. It is possible, in fact, to use *tneen* just like any other number with the plural noun in place of the dual: *tneen @rjaal* 'two men'. Often the dual is used to introduce the idea of two Xes before switching to the plural thereafter.

The plural

In fuSHa nouns are usually pluralised in one of three ways: with the sound masculine *-uun/iin*, with the sound feminine *-aat*, or with some kind of broken plural pattern. This is largely the same in Shami. The sound masculine plural is invariably *-iin* (there's no case), the

sound feminine is *-aat*, and there is a bewildering array of broken plural patterns which can be largely predicted from the shape of the singular noun. Some of these are the same as fuSHa:

مكتب مكاتب *maktab makaateb* ‘office’

مفتاح مفاتيح *miftaa7 mafaatii7* ‘key’

Some correspond to fuSHa patterns closely with minor adjustments in line with common correspondences:

درس دروس *dars druus* ‘lesson’

كلب كلاب *kalb klaab* ‘dog’

شهيد شهدا *shahiid shéhada* ‘martyr’

Some seem to be unique to colloquial:

فرد فريدة *fard fruude* ‘gun’

Also unique to colloquial is the formation of a number of plurals with the suffix *-ة* or *-ية* (-*a/e* or *-iyye*) which is normally restricted in fuSHa to feminines. This applies to a number of nouns, most particularly many *nisba* nouns:

لبنانية *lébnaaniyye* Lebanese people

مسيحية *masii7iyye* Christians (there’s also the weird plural إسلام *islaam* for مسلم *méslem/muslem*)

شوفرية *shooferiyye* drivers

حلبية *7alabiyye* Aleppans

لعبية *la33iibe* ‘players’

It’s best just to learn nouns’ plurals as you encounter them (though Cowell’s Syrian grammar has an exhaustive list of patterns if you want to look it up).

Collectives and their singulars

Some nouns do not have a simple singular/plural distinction – they are collectives, which take singular agreement and refer to an undifferentiated mass of stuff:

ورق *wara2* ‘paper’

بطاطا *baTaaTa* ‘potatoes’

بندورة *banadoora* ‘tomatoes’

So far so fuSHa. Like fuSHa, in order to refer to a single item (e.g. a piece), we need a ‘singulative’. For most native nouns this is formed by addition of ة, producing a feminine singular noun. In many cases generic noun حبة *7abbe* (which itself is the singulative of *7abb*) is typically used instead:

ورقة *wara2a* ‘piece of paper’

حبة بطاطا *7abbet baTaaTa* ‘a (single) potato’

Lots of speakers are actually perfectly happy to form singulatives from loanwords like بطاطا:

بطاطاية *baTaaTaaye* ‘a (single) potato’

بندورية *banadooraaye* ‘a (single) tomato’

Of course, these singulatives can be pluralised and counted, usually with *-aat* but sometimes with a broken plural:

ثلاث بطاطيات *tlett baTaaTaayaat* ‘three potatoes’

ثلاث ورقات *tlett waraa2* or ثلاث أوراق *tlett wara2aat* ‘three pieces of paper’

Collectives also often have their own plurals formed with *بات*, which then refers to a specific... instance, I guess?

شو هالبردات

shu hal-bardaat

it’s so cold! = what is this cold we’re experiencing?

شو بدك بهالتلجات

shu béddak b-hat-taljaat

what are you doing with that snow? = that snow in your hands

كيف اللحامات اليوم؟

kiif élla7maat élyoom?

how’s the meat today? = the meat in your shop

قهوات مرتي كثير طيبين

2ahwaat marti ktiir Tayybiin

my wife’s coffee is really tasty = the coffee she makes (the singular would imply the coffee that belongs to her, the coffee she is drinking as opposed to yours)

They can also have broken plurals, which often refer to large amounts or different kinds:

ميايا *mayaaaya* ‘waters’

زيوت *zyuut* ‘oils’

Negation

Nouns and adjectives are typically negated with *mish* (Jor/Pal/Leb) or *muu* (Syr):

مو منيح *muu mnii7* – not good

مو رجال *muu réjjaal* – not a man

There are exceptions to these rules but at this point they are not very important.

There is also a construction using the semi-verb *maan-* (or *maal-*) which is used in Syr/Leb: *maani maanak maanek maano maan(h)a maanna maankon maan(h)on*.

مالي رايع *maali raaye7* – I'm not going

مانو مضبوط *maano maZbuuT* – it's not right

Adjectives

Masculine, feminine and plural

Adjectives typically only have three or four forms in colloquial – a masculine singular, a feminine singular, and a plural which does not distinguish gender. In most adjectives the feminine is formed through addition of *-a/e*, sometimes dropping an unstressed short vowel:

كبير كبير *kbiir kbiire* – big

شاطر شاطر *shaaTer shaaTra* – clever

مشهور مشهور *mashhuur mashhuura* – famous

The only other regular feminine pattern that exists is for adjectives of ‘colour and defect’ (basically adjectives with masculines formed on *af3al*), which have a feminine in *fa3la* and usually a plural in *fé3l*:

أهبل أهبل *ahbal habale hébl* – idiot

اسود اسود *aswad sooda suud* – black

اسمر اسمر *asmar samra sémr* – brown-skinned

The plural is formed either through the addition of the suffix *-iin* or on a broken plural pattern (some of which are rare or nonexistent in fuSHa):

شاطر شاطر *shaaTer shaaTriin* – clever

كبار كبير *kbiir kbaar* – big

قليل قليل *2aliil 2alaayle* – few

Many speakers have an optional feminine plural in *-aat* which can only occur with feminine plurals:

طيب طيبين طيبات *Tayyeb Tayybiin Tayybaat* – tasty

Agreement

Dual nouns usually take plural nouns:

رجالين اوادم *réjjaaleen 2awaadim* – two nice guys

شغلتين مهمين *shégh@lteen muhummiin* – two important things

Plural inanimate nouns, unlike in (modern) fuSHa, can occur with both feminine singular and plural adjectives. Where there is a nuance, it is that the singular generalises or collectivises more:

الكراسي فاضية
élkaraasi faaDye
the chairs are empty

الكراسي فاضيين
élkaraasi faaDyiin
the (various, different) chairs are empty

When the plural noun is used in a generic sense (i.e. when it is translated as ‘Xes are good’ and not ‘the Xes are good’), however, only the feminine is acceptable.

الكتب مفيدة
élkétoḃ muḃiide
books are useful (or ‘the books are useful’)

الكتب مفيدين كثير
élkétoḃ muḃiidiin @ktiir
the books are very useful = the ones you gave me

Matching feminine singular adjectives (or verbs) with plural *animate* nouns is also possible, although much less common (and again generalises).

As in fuSHa, adjectives agree with nouns in definiteness when they modify them:

الكتب المنيحة
élkétoḃ lémnii7a
the good books

Modifying adjectives

Unlike in fuSHa, adverbs modifying adjectives, like *ktiir* ‘very’ (and its fancier equivalent, *jiddan*) can go before the adjective as well as after it:

كثير صعب
ktiir Sa3@b
very difficult

عن جد جدا مفيد
3an jadd jiddan muḃiid
[it] really [was] very useful

بس شوي حامي صراحة
bass shwayy 7aami Siraa7a
but it’s a bit hot, to be honest

Superlative and comparative

As in fuSHa not all adjectives can have a superlative derived from them. Only the simpler superlative and comparative constructions (with no agreement) appear in colloquial. Superlatives cannot usually stand on their own and require a noun to come after them:

أشطر واحد
ashTar waa7ed
the cleverest (one)

If an adjective cannot form its own superlative, a construction with *aktar* immediately preceding the noun is used with the normal adjective:

أكثر واحد مجنون
aktar waa7ed majnuun
the craziest one

This construction can also be used with verbs to translate ‘the X I Yed most’:

أكثر شي حبيتو بالاردن
aktar shi 7abbeeto bél2érdon
the thing I liked most about/in Jordan

Comparatives follow as in fuSHa. Although they are invariable for gender and number, they do agree in definiteness where appropriate:

واحد اشطر مني *waa7ed ashTar ménni* – someone cleverer than me

القفينة الاكبر *él2anniine él2akbar* – the bigger bottle

If an adjective cannot form its own comparative, a structure with the plain adjective plus *aktar* following it is used:

مجنون أكثر *majnuun aktar* – crazier

Negating adjectives

Unlike fuSHa, nominal sentences (i.e. sentences like ‘the X is Y’) are usually negated with a particle rather than a verb. This particle is *muu* in Syrian and *mish* in the other Levantine dialects:

مش جديد
mish @jdiid
(he’s) not new

This particle, as well as the غير you may be familiar with from fuSHa, can precede adjectives with articles, in which case they take the article:

المو معقول انو يرشح حالو
él-muu ma32uul énno yrashshe7 7aalo
the unreasonable/unbelievable thing is for him to nominate himself

الشخص المو منيح
ésh-shakhS él-muu mnii7
the not good person

In Leb/Syr, adjectives can also be negated with the sort-of-verbal negative ‘to be’ structure, which conjugates for person as *maani*, *maanak*, *maaneke*, *maano*, *maan(h)a*, *maanna*, *maankon*, *maan(h)on*. In Syria some people say *maal-* instead, and in Lebanon the forms are with *mann-* (not *maan-*).

ماني جديد

maani jdiid

I’m not new

Adverbs

Most adjectives can be used straightforwardly as adverbs to modify verbs:

عود ادمي

3ood 2aadami

Sit nicely! [= nice]

بتحكي عربي منيح

bté7ki 3arabi mnii7

You speak Arabic well

This includes superlatives:

انت بتعرف احسن مني

inte bta3ref a7san ménni

You know better than me

The equivalents of *7aal* expressions with accusatives in fuSHa are simply unmarked:

الشيكات بتجي هيك طويلة

éshsheekaat btéji heek Tawiile

cheques are longer than this [= come long]

الماسورة جاية فلتانة

élmaasuura jaaye faltaane

The pipe's gone loose [= is coming, loose]

There are some fuSHa adverbial expressions formed with the accusative suffix *-an* which are also commonly used in colloquial:

عادةً *3aadatan* 'usually'

اصلاً *aSlan* 'to start with'

اساساً *asaasan* 'basically'

مبدئياً *mabda2iyyan* 'to start with, as a starting point'

خاصةً *khaaSSatan* 'in particular'

عامّةً *3aamatan* 'in general'

There are also many expressions formed with the prepositions *بـ* and *على*. For these see the relevant sections.

Past tense

Conjugation

The suffixes used for conjugating all past tense verbs are as follows:

		درس <i>daras</i> 'study'	
<i>ana</i>	<i>daras-t</i>	درست	انا
<i>inte</i>	<i>daras-t</i>	درست	انت
<i>inti</i>	<i>daras-ti</i>	درستي	انتي
<i>huwwe</i>	<i>daras</i>	درس	هو
<i>hiyye</i>	<i>dars-et (dars-at)</i>	درس	هي
<i>ni7na</i>	<i>daras-na</i>	درسنا	نحنه
<i>into</i>	<i>daras-tu</i>	درستو	انتو
<i>hinen</i>	<i>daras-u</i>	درسو	هنن

As you can see, they generally line up with fuSHa but without the final vowels, except *-et*. In Palestinian *-at* and not *-et* is used, as in fuSHa. There are no dual forms and no plural feminine forms, and the forms for *ana* and *inte* are identical and can only be distinguished by context. The consonant cluster at the end of *darast* is often broken up with a helping vowel: *daras@t*.

Usage

As in fuSHa, the past is used for single instances (i.e. not continuous or habitual action) in the past tense, meaning it generally lines up with the English simple past ('I went' etc). It is also often used in places where in English we would use the present perfect ('I have been'):

هلاً قرّيت بزماڻي شي سبعين تقرير، وشفت شي ميتين فيلم
halla2 2areet bzamaani shi sab3iin taqriir, w shéf@t shi miiteen fil@m
now in my time I've read some seventy reports, and seen some two hundred films...

مرة رحت ع السفارة
marra ré7@t 3a ssafaara
one time I went to the embassy

An important usage that is very common is with verbs of becoming. With these verbs the past is used in a way that often lines up with the use of an adjective in English:

نعست *n3és@t* – I'm sleepy (I've become sleepy)

شبعث *shbé3@t* – I'm full (I've had my fill/become full)

مليت *malleet* – I'm bored (I've become bored, got bored)

عرفت 3réf@t – I know (I’ve found out, I’ve worked out what you’re talking about)³

حببت 7abbeet – I like, I’ve fallen in love

In a few cases the past can express non-past meaning when triggered by specific particles:

بس فضيت خبرني
bass @fDiit khabbérni
As soon as you’re free [= get free], let me know

ویرکي ما قدرت تجي؟
w-berki maa 2dér@t téji?
What if you can’t come?

The past tense verb also has an important secondary use in conditionals of various kinds which we will discuss in the introduction to conditional sentences.

Negation

The past tense is almost always negated with *maa*:

ما رحت maa ré7@t - I didn’t go

There is no *lam* and no jussive form. In Southern Levantine of course it can take the variant *ma-sh*:

ما رحتش maru7tesh – I didn’t go

Present tense

Conjugation

The forms are quite similar to the fuSHa subjunctive. As elsewhere, there are no dual and no plural feminine forms. There are two main sets of prefixes used for the present tense depending on whether the ‘stem’ (the part that remains constant between all the forms, like -*dros*- or -*darres*-) begins with a consonant cluster or a single consonant:

درس <i>daras</i> ‘study’			
<i>ana</i>	<i>b-é-dros (b-a-dros)</i>	بدرس	انا
<i>inte</i>	<i>b-té-dros (b-ti-dros)</i>	بتدرس	انت
<i>inti</i>	<i>b-té-dros-i (b-ti-dros-i)</i>	بتدرسي	انتي
<i>huwwe</i>	<i>b-yé-dros (b-i-dros)</i>	بيدرس, بدرس	هو
<i>hiyye</i>	<i>b-té-dros (b-ti-dros)</i>	بتدرس	هي
<i>ni7na</i>	<i>m-né-dros (b-ni-dros)</i>	مندرس	نحنه

³ Contrast this one with ما كنت اعرف ‘I didn’t know’.

<i>intu</i>	<i>b-té-dros-u (b-ti-dros-u)</i>	بتدروس	انتو
<i>hinnen</i>	<i>b-yé-dros-u (b-i-dros-u)</i>	بيدروس	هنن

darras درس

‘teach, put through school’

<i>ana</i>	<i>b-darres (b-a-darres)</i>	بدرس	انا
<i>inte</i>	<i>b-ét-darres (b-it-darres)</i>	بتدرس	انت
<i>inti</i>	<i>b-ét-darres-i (b-it-darres-i)</i>	بتدرسي	انتي
<i>huwwe</i>	<i>b-i-darres</i>	بدرس	هو
<i>hiyye</i>	<i>b-ét-darres (b-it-darres)</i>	بتدرس	هي
<i>ni7na</i>	<i>m-én-darres (b-in-darres)</i>	مندرس	نحنه
<i>intu</i>	<i>bé-t-darres-u (b-it-darres-u)</i>	بتدروس	انتو
<i>hinnen</i>	<i>b-i-darres-u</i>	بيدروس	هنن

There are some important things to note. Where *fuSHa* has a in all of its prefixes, Syrian and Lebanese have é throughout and Jordanian and Palestinian have i throughout except in the first person where they have a–, like *fuSHa*. Secondly, because Jo/Pal have *a-* in the first person, this allows them to contract the third person masculine form *byidros* to *bidros*. This can lead to confusion for the learner, because in Leb/Syr *bédros* is first person, whilst in Pal/Jor it is third person masculine.

Also important to note, although not related to *fuSHa*, is the first person plural, where *b-* changes to *m-* under the influence of *n-*. This does not happen for all speakers, however, and *bn-* is common especially in Jo/Pal.

We should note one important exception to the Syrian/Lebanese selection of prefixes above. In the very common verbs *3éref* ‘know’ and *3émel* ‘do’, the prefix vowel is always *a* in these dialects:

عمل *3émel* ‘do’

<i>ana</i>	<i>b-a-3mel</i>	بعمل	انا
<i>inte</i>	<i>b-ta-3mel</i>	بتعمل	انت
<i>inti</i>	<i>b-ta-3mel-i</i>	بتعملي	انتي
<i>huwwe</i>	<i>b-ya-3mel</i>	بيعمل	هو

<i>hiyye</i>	<i>b-ta-3mel</i>	بتعمل	هي
<i>ni7na</i>	<i>m-na-3mel</i>	منعمل	نحنه
<i>intu</i>	<i>b-ta-3mel-u</i>	بتعملو	انتو
<i>hinnen</i>	<i>b-ya-3mel-u</i>	بيعملو	هنن

This is not the case in Jor/Pal, where we get instead regular forms like *bti3raf*.

Usage

The present tense with *b-* is used to talk about generalisations, habitual action and dispositions. This mainly lines up with its use in fuSHa or the simple present in English:

بحبك
b7ébbak
I love you

بدرس دكتور
bédros doktoor
I study medicine

بروح لعندو كل يوم
bruu7 la-3éndo kéll yoom
I go and see him every day

Sometimes, however, it is best translated as ‘would’. This is its ‘dispositional’ usage and often involves an implied or present conditional:

محلي محلك ما بدفع
ma7alli ma7allak maa bédfa3
if I was in your shoes I wouldn’t pay

ما بروح على هيك حفلة
maa bruu7 3ala heek 7afle
I wouldn’t go to a party like that

It can also occasionally express continuous meaning, (e.g. Jor/Pal بمزح معك *bamza7 ma3ak* ‘I’m joking’). But this is more commonly expressed with the particle *3am* which appears before either the *b-* form or the *b-less* form of the present tense:

ما عم بفهم عليك
maa 3am béfham 3aleek
I’m not understanding you

عم يجي لعندك كثير هالأيام
3am yiji la-3éndak @ktiir hal-2iyyaam
he's coming to your house a lot these days

It is also used for the future:

اي بروح بكرأ
ee bruu7 bukra
yeah, I'll go tomorrow

And for polite requests/suggestions in Syr/Leb:

بتشرب قهوة؟
btéshrab 2ahwe?
would you like some coffee? [= will you drink]

بكون bikuun

The present tense form of the verb كان has a number of special uses. Firstly, it is commonly used (where we might expect no verb) when describing family relationships:

احمد بكون ابن خالي
a7mad bikuun ib@n khaali
Ahmad is my cousin

هلينت شو بتكنلك؟
halbén@t shu bétkén-lak?
what is this girl to you [= how is she related to you, she's your what?]

It's also used for future or for expressing conclusions:

بكرأ الصبح بكون ع باب بيتك
békra éSSéb@7 bikuun 3a-baab beetak
I'll be at your front door tomorrow morning

كل مخلوق بيعتلو فيديو خمس دقائق ويبضحك بعد دقيقة بكون مخلوق كذاب
kéll makhluu2 béb3atlo viidyo kham@s da2aaye2 w byéD7ak ba3@d da2ii2a bikuun makhluu2 kazzaab
every person who I send a 5 minute video to who laughs after a minute is a liar [= will be a lying guy]

Negation

Like the past tense the present is typically negated with *maa*:

ما بحبك *maa b7ébbak* 'I don't love you'

Subjunctive

The form in Shami that looks more like the fuSHa present tense (and the present tense in lots of other dialects), without *b-*, is very similar in behaviour to subjunctives in European languages.

Conjugation

The *b*-less present conjugates almost identically to the forms with *b-*:

درس <i>daras</i> 'study'			
<i>ana</i>	<i>é-dros (a-dros)</i>	ادرس	انا
<i>inte</i>	<i>té-dros (ti-dros)</i>	تدرس	انت
<i>inti</i>	<i>té-dros-i (ti-dros-i)</i>	تدرسي	انتي
<i>huwwe</i>	<i>yé-dros (i-dros)</i>	يدرس	هو
<i>hiyye</i>	<i>té-dros (ti-dros)</i>	تدرس	هي
<i>ni7na</i>	<i>né-dros (ni-dros)</i>	ندرس	نحنه
<i>intu</i>	<i>té-dros-u (ti-dros-u)</i>	تدرسو	انتو
<i>hinnen</i>	<i>yé-dros-u (yi-dros-u)</i>	يدرسو	هنن

درس <i>darras</i> 'teach, put through school'			
<i>ana</i>	<i>darres (a-darres)</i>	بدرس	انا
<i>inte</i>	<i>t-darres</i>	بتدرس	انت
<i>inti</i>	<i>t-darres-i</i>	بتدرسي	انتي
<i>huwwe</i>	<i>y-darres</i>	بدرس	هو
<i>hiyye</i>	<i>t-darres</i>	بتدرس	هي
<i>ni7na</i>	<i>n-darres</i>	مندرس	نحنه
<i>intu</i>	<i>t-darres-u</i>	بتدرسو	انتو
<i>hinnen</i>	<i>y-darres-u</i>	بيدرسو	هنن

One thing which is important to note is that in Syr/Leb, on verbs like *darras*, there is no first person prefix. This means that the first person singular form – *darres* – looks identical to the masculine singular imperative (also *darres*). This does not apply in Jor/Pal.

Usage

The use of the subjunctive is largely triggered by environment – that is, there is usually some other word in the sentence you can identify as the trigger. This post would be far too long if

we listed all of the triggers for the subjunctive, but we'll list some of the most common ones. It is used following expressions of desire, hope, fear, ability and compulsion:

بدي روح
béddi ruu7
I want to go

بحب امشي
b7ebb émshi
I'd like to leave; I like walking

يا ريت تعرفلي وقت الموعد
yaa reet ta3réf-li wa2t él-moo3ed
I'd really like you to find out the time of the appointment for me

خايف تروح عليي الفرصة
khaayef @truu7 3aleyyi élférSa
I'm scared I'll miss the opportunity

معي وقت اتمشى شوي
ma3i wa2@t étmashsha shweyy
I've got time to walk around for a bit

اضتريت انو ارجع ع البيت
éDTarreet énno érja3 3albeet
I was forced to go home

It often appears after certain verbs – particularly verbs of motion – to express purpose. A similar construction exists in fuSHa with the jussive.

بدي روح شوف الدكتور
béddi ruu7 shuuf éddoktuur
I want to go and see the doctor

انا فايت نام
ana faayet naam
I'm going to bed [= going in to sleep]

It is also used very commonly with expressions combining a preposition with *ma* and meaning for example 'without', 'instead of', 'before', 'after', 'until' etc (the equivalent of fuSHa من دون أن and other expressions):

بلا ما يفوت ع البيت
bala ma yfuut 3a-lbeet
without him coming inside

بعد ما ينام
ba3@d ma ynaam
after he sleeps⁴

It is used with كان to form a past habitual, as in fuSHa. *kaan* does not need to appear in every sentence, and often once the timeframe of a story is established the *b*-less present is used with all verbs throughout the narrative, which can be confusing for a non-native.

كان يروح كل يوم
kaan yruu7 kéll yoom
he used to go every day

It is used without any triggering word commonly in prayers ('may/let X happen'). This is the only construction in colloquial (other than the negative imperative) which is normally negated by *laa* (as in MSA) rather than *maa*:⁵

يعطيك العافية
ya3Tiik él3aafye
[God] give you health

لا تكون راجع لهون
laa tkuun raaje3 lahoon
I hope you're not coming back here

It is also very commonly used in suggestions for personal action:

سمّعك الغنية؟ *samm3ak élghanniyye?* – shall I play you the song?

شو اعملك؟ *shu a3mél-lak?* – what should I do for you?

In Lebanese however the *b*- form is used for suggestions where the question does not have a yes or no answer but has a question word or presents answers, as in the second example above (where Lebanese speakers would say شو بعملك *shu ba3mél-lak*).

In Pal/Jor, the subjunctive form is also used in suggestions to another person. In Syr/Leb, the *b*-present is used here:

تشرب شاي؟ *tishrab shaay?* – (would you like to) drink some tea?

⁴ Some speakers distinguish habitual بعد ما ينام *ba3@d ma binaam* and future بعد ما ينام *ba3@d ma ynaam* – the first would be used for example in 'every day after he goes to sleep I read a book' and the second in 'after he goes to sleep this evening, I'll read a book'.

⁵ The only exception to this is *laa... laa* 'neither... nor'.

Imperative

The formation of the imperative (فعل الأمر) is one of the major dividing lines between Jor/Pal and Syr/Leb. However, the differences are exclusively in form 1 ('simple') verbs. For non-form-1 verbs, the imperative is simply the present form with the prefix removed:

تتعلم *té-t3allam* > تعلم *t3allam* 'learn!' (masc)

تعلمي *t-3allm-i* > علمي *3allmi* 'teach!' (fem)

تشتغلو *té-shteghl-u* > اشتغلو *shtéghlu* 'work!' (pl)

Sometimes, especially where it appears in fuSHa writing, the initial *l* may be written in forms in Shami before consonant clusters. This does not mean it is necessarily pronounced.

For form 1 verbs, Jor/Pal work like fuSHa, prefixing *i-* or *u-* to the present form minus its prefix depending on the stem vowel for sound and defective verbs and using the present form minus its prefix on its own for hollow verbs:

افتح *ifta7* 'open!'

ادرس *udros* 'study!'

احكي *i7ki* 'speak!'

قول *2uul!* 'say'

Syr/Leb follow Jor/Pal in their treatment of hollow and defective verbs, but with sound verbs (with three solid root consonants) they do not add a prefix but instead lengthen the stem vowel:

فتاح *ftaa7!* 'open!' (< *yéfta7*)

دروس *droos!* 'study!' (< *yédros*)

مسبك *mseek!* 'take!' (< *yémsik*)

The vowel is not lengthened in the feminine and the plural, but neither is a prefix added:

فتحي *fta7i* 'open!'

درسو *drésu* 'study!'

This also applies to the imperatives of *akal* 'eat', *akhad* 'take' and *2é3ed* 'sit', which are slightly irregular:

خود خدي *khood khédi khédu* 'take!' (you might hear the shortened *kho*, *khi*)

كول كلي *kool kéli kélu* 'eat!'

3ood 3édi 3édu ‘sit!’ (compare with the regular Jor/Pal u23od).

عطى 3aTa ‘to give’ has an irregular imperative:

عطو 3aTi 3aTi 3aTu ‘give!’

اجى *ija* does not have a regular imperative, replaced (as in fuSHa) by the following forms:

تعال تعالي تعالو *ta3aal ta3aali ta3aalu*

تع تعي تعو *ta3 ta3i ta3u*

A few other forms are used with imperative meaning that are not full verbal paradigms (or not verbs at all):

مكانك *makaanak* (*makaanik* etc) – ‘stop where you are’

ايدك *iidak* (*iidik* etc) – ‘put that down!’

And most commonly:

هات هاتي هاتو *haat haati haatu* ‘give me, hand over’ (e.g. هات المصاري ‘give us the money’)

Negation

The negative imperative is typically formed with *maa* plus the subjunctive, similar to fuSHa:

ما تروح *maa truu7* ‘don’t go’

In Jor/Pal it can take the final *-esh*:

مترووحش *matruu7esh* ‘don’t go’

Many Syrian speakers use لا instead, lining up even more with fuSHa:

لا تروح
laa truu7
don’t go!

It can occasionally be formed with *muu/mish*, which gives a nuance which you might translate into English as ‘don’t go Xing’ or ‘don’t go and X’:

كول صندويشتك مو مثل العادة ترجعلي باها
kool Sandwiishtak muu métl él3aade trajjé3li yaaha
eat your sandwich – don’t go bringing it back to me like usual!

Participles

Participles (اسم فاعل واسم مفعول) are much more broadly used in Shami than in fuSHa. Often described lazily as equivalent to the English continuous, this is only rarely the case and learning to use them properly (and understand their meaning) is very important to understanding normal speech.

Formation

Passive participles are basically the same as in fuSHa, except that those which are formed with a *mu-* prefix are usually formed with a *m(é)-* prefix instead (مكسر *mkassar* ‘broken’). Form I hollow participles are regularised (مبيع *mabyuu3* ‘sold’, not مباع) and in Syr/Leb – though not in Jor/Pal – form I defective participles are prefixed with *me-*, not *ma-* (مطفي *méTfi* ‘switched off’).

Outside form I, active participles are also generally formed similarly to fuSHa, with the same exception of *m(é)-* replacing *mu-* (متعلم *mét3allem* ‘educated’, *mtarjem* ‘having translated, translator’). In form I most verbs form their participles on a variant of the *faa3el* pattern as in fuSHa.

It is important to note as well that in recent ‘borrowings’ from fuSHa, in more educated speech, etc, fuSHa forms are used as well even in colloquial: متقف *musaqqaf* ‘cultured’, متداول *mutadaawel* ‘ranging between’ etc.

There is an additional form I participle pattern in *fa3laan* (or for a few irregular verbs *fé3laan*) for some form I verbs (تعبان *ta3baan* ‘tired’, بردان *bardaan* ‘cold’, ربيان *rébyaan* ‘having grown up’, سكران *sékraan* ‘drunk’). You have probably already encountered this in fuSHa with جوعان, تعبان and other related forms, although some teachers will tell you that this is not in fact proper fuSHa. Regardless of its correctness in writing, this form is found with quite a few verbs in the Levant. In Jor/Pal/Leb, these forms are almost exclusively used with a relatively small set of verbs of becoming: تعب ‘get tired’, برد ‘get cold’, سكر ‘get drunk’. In Syrian in particular, however, its usage has been extended to a lot more verbs, and this much broader use (وصلان, شربان, عرفان, فهمان) is very characteristic of Syrian.

Whether a verb has a *fa3laan* or a *faa3el* participle is to some extent unpredictable and has to be learnt, especially in Syrian. Most form I verbs of becoming, however, have one of these participles.

Gender and number

All participles have regular feminines in *ة* and plurals in *ين*:

حاسس حاسة حاسين *7aases 7aasse 7aassiin*

كاتب كاتبة كاتبين *kaateb kaatbe kaatbiin*

Use

Active participles especially are very common in colloquial. The use you've probably encountered if you have any familiarity with any dialect at all is with certain verbs of motion. For these, the participle is often used in a continuous way:

وين رايح؟ *ween raaye7*? – where are you going?

ماشيين *maashyiin* – we're walking (somewhere)⁶

This can of course be used in a future sense similar to the English continuous:

نازل هون؟

naazel hoon?

are you getting off [the bus] here?

With most verbs, however, the participle has the sense of completion of an action often lining up with the English present perfect. This is easiest to show with verbs of becoming. You probably already know تعب *té3eb* 'get tired' and its participle تعبان *ta3baan* 'tired'. Another good example is طول *Téwel* 'get long, tall' and its causative equivalent *Tawwal* 'lengthen, let grow longer', whose participles contrast with simple طويل 'long, tall'.

دقنك طولان

da2nak Toolaan

your beard has got longer/is longer

مطول دقنك

mTawwel da2nak

you've grown your beard out/let it grow longer

Do not mistake forms like كاتب, دارس etc for 'writing', 'studying'. This will confuse your understanding and, if you use them that way, the meaning you're trying to put across!

There are some verbs which typically have a 'becoming' sense in colloquial which are not necessarily used in the same way in fuSHa. ليس *lébes* for example in colloquial means 'get dressed' or with an object 'put on', and as such لابس *laabes* means 'wearing' or 'having got dressed'. بلبس *bélbes* means 'I get dressed' or 'I put on'; it doesn't mean 'I'm wearing'. The same applies to نام *naam*, which usually means 'go to sleep' (thus نايم is sleeping and بنام means 'I go to sleep' and not 'I'm sleeping'), سكن *sakan*, which usually means 'take up residence' (thus ساكن is 'living'), and many others.

The sense of completion, however, is not restricted to verbs of becoming or intransitive verbs:

سمعت انو فاتح محامي

smé3@t éнно faate7 mu7aami

I heard he's opened a lawyer['s practice]

⁶ *Maashi* in the meaning 'walking' only works as a verb of motion/direction. If you want to say 'we're walking' and the emphasis is on the *nature* of the action (and not the movement from one place to another) you have to say عم نمشي with the continuous.

كاتبتك كل شي ع الورقة
kaatéblak kéll shi 3a-lwara2a
I've written everything down for you on the paper

Confusingly, even verbs of motion can have this sense. We saw رايح above in a continuous meaning, but it can also mean 'have been', depending on the context:

رايح شي على المانيا؟
raaye7 shi 3ala 2almaanya?
have you ever been to Germany?

قديش صار لكون طالعين من الحارة
2addeesh Sallkon Taal3iin mn él7aara?
how long has it been since you left the neighbourhood [= how long has it become for you having left the neighbourhood?]

Participles can also be used in an emphatic future sense stressing the certainty (or impossibility) of an action:

اي من هلق موقع عليه
ee mén halla2 mwaqqe3 3alee
consider it signed [from now I've signed it]

ماني باعنة حدا لعندك
maani baa3te 7ada la3éndak
I'm not sending anyone to your house! (depending on context this could also be 'I haven't sent...')

Participles with objects

With noun objects participles do not form an *iDaafe* but act like verbs. This is not clear in the masculine, but in the feminine (where -e should become -et) it is obvious:

انا كاتبنة رسالة *ana kaatbe risaale* – I've written a letter

When object pronouns are attached to a feminine participle with ة, the ة usually becomes -t:

مسويتو *msawwiit-o* – she's done it

كاتبتنا *kaatébt-a* – she's written it

For some Southern Levantine speakers, it lengthens instead (similar to Egyptian):

كاتباها *kaatbaa-ha* – she's written it

Furthermore, when the subject is second person feminine singular انتي, participles gain an -ii- when a pronoun is added. This does not apply if the subject is otherwise feminine:

مخبيتيه؟ *mkhabbiiitii?* – have you hidden it?

Participles and nouns-from-participles

Some participles proper (i.e. parts of the verbal paradigm) are also nouns with a distinct meaning – كاتب *kaateb* and طالب *Taaleb* can either be participles ‘having written’ and ‘asked for’ or nouns meaning ‘writer’ or ‘student’. These are obviously etymologically derived from the participles, but they’re distinct in meaning and often have their own broken plurals (*kéttaab* and *Téllaab* in these cases) which do not work for the plurals of the participles. They also form *iDaafe* with their objects rather than taking direct objects normally:

هي كاتبة لكتاب *hiyye kaatbet léktaab* – she’s the author of the book

There are a number of cases with non-form I verbs where rather than using the colloquial participle, the noun equivalent is taken from fuSHa and has *mu-* instead:

مدرب *mudarreb* coach, *mdarreb* having trained (someone)

مفوض *mufawwaD* commissioner / *mfawwaD* (having been) commissioned

These are distinct. To use *mdarreb* for ‘coach’ (or, for that matter, *mudarreb* for ‘having trained’) is incorrect.

Compound tense structures

Future

There are various ways to express the future. One is by using the simple present with *b-* on its own:

بروح معك *bruu7 ma3ak* ‘I’ll go with you’

One is by using *bédd-* (literally ‘want’):

بدي امرك لعندو بكرأ *béddi émro2 la-3éndo bukra* – I’m going to go to his house tomorrow

Another common way is with the particle *راح ra7(a)-* or the prefix *7a-* (also *راح* in some parts of Syria and sometimes *رايح*):

راح روح *ra7 ruu7* – I’ll go

حشوفك بكرأ *7a-shuufak bukra* – I’ll see you tomorrow

There are differences in nuance between these different forms and the use of the bare present, as there are between ‘going to’, ‘will’ and the present continuous in English, but these differences are difficult to pin down. Native speakers have an intuition about what sounds right and wrong in different sentences, and the only way to gain that sort of intuition as a non-native speaker is from practice.

Continuous

The continuous is formed with *3am* which can be combined with the subjunctive or *b-* present. It typically lines up with the English continuous form in that it suggests repetitive action over a specific period of time:

عم ادرس *3am édros* – I’m studying

ضرسي ما عم ينوملي الليل

Dérsi maa 3am ynawwemni élleel

my tooth is stopping me from sleeping at night [= is not letting me sleep]

One small difference in usage is that *3am* can be used with many verbs that in English do not permit a continuous:

ما عم بقدر افتح الباب

maa 3am bé2der éfta7 élbaab

I can’t get the door open [= I’m not being able to...]

The continuous is often best translated with the English perfect continuous:

عم اقرى كتير هالايام
3am é2ra ktiir hal2éyyaam
I've been reading a lot these days

Combinations of kaan and other verb forms

kan can be used with other verb forms to make compound tenses, as in fuSHa. With the subjunctive past *kaan* can be used to form a past habitual:

كان يدرس *kaan yédros* – he used to study

With the continuous it can be used to form a past continuous:

عم ادرس كنت *ként 3am édroS* – I was studying

With the future the past form of *kaan* can be used to form a future-in-past:

كان رح يشتي
kaan ra7 yshatti
it was going to rain

كنت رح انجلط
ként ra7 énjaleT
I almost had a heart attack!

كان بدو يفوت
kaan béddo yfuut
he was about to go in (or 'he wanted to go in')

With the past or participle, it can form a pluperfect:

كان راح
kaan raa7
he'd gone

كان جايب كولا
kaan jaayeb koola
he'd brought some coke

The present form *bikuun* can also be used with past, continuous and future in a similar way to express either assumptions or to centre the action on the future:

بكون عم يدرس
bikuun 3am yédros
he must be studying, he'll be studying

بكون خلص
bikuun khallaS
he'll have finished, he must have finished

بكون بدو يفوت
bikuun béddo yfuut
he'll be about to go in

The *b*-less form can be used similarly where it is triggered by something:

خايف يكون فات من الباب الثاني
khaayef ykuun faat mn élbaab éttaani
I'm afraid he might have come in through the other door

Possession

iDaafe

As we all know from fuSHa, two or more nouns can be put into a possessive structure by simply sticking them alongside one another in *iDaafe* (إضافة), literally ‘addition’ and fiddling about with the case and *tanwiin* suffixes. The absence of case suffixes and *tanwiin* makes this much simpler in Shami. Nouns that do not end with the suffix ة do not typically change at all when placed into iDaafe with another noun, other than predictable addition of helping vowels:

مكتب احمي *maktab a7mad* ‘Ahmed’s office’

اسم حبيبي *is@m 7abiibt* ‘my lover’s name’

The ending ة -a/e always turns into -et on the first term of *iDaafe* (rather than -at- as in fuSHa). In line with the normal rules of vowel dropping, this can sometimes contract to simply -t before vowels:

قطي اختي *2aTTet ékhti* ‘my sister’s cat’

مدرسة احمي *madras(e)t a7mad* ‘Ahmad’s school’

As in fuSHa, the iDaafe can express all sorts of different relationships alongside possession:

كيس النايلون *kiis éннаaylon* ‘the plastic bag’

كاسي مي *kaaset moyy* ‘a glass of water’

بيت المخذة *beet lémkhadde* ‘the pillowcase’

رخصة سواقه *rékhSet @swaa2a* ‘driving licence’

As in fuSHa, only the final term of iDaafe can take a definite article. But in Syrian, the contracted ‘this/that’ *hal-*, which is clearly derived from the definite article, can appear at the beginning of an *iDaafe* as well:

هلكاسي المي *halkaast élmoyy* ‘this glass of water’

Taba3

Apart from the *iDaafe* the main way of expressing possession is the particle تبع *taba3* (or نع *ta3*). This appears between the noun and its possessor. As with the *iDaafe* it can express various different types of relationship.

حط الستاتوس تبع الواتس بكومنت

7étt lé-status taba3 élwat@s bkooment

Put [your] Whatsapp status in a comment

اللون تبع جراباتك اللي انت لابسو حاليا هو لون قلبك

élloon taba3 jraabaatak élli inte laabso 7aaliyyan huwwe loon 2albak

The colour of the socks you're wearing now is the colour of your heart

بيقولك راح ناس تبع جمعيات خيرية يشوفو اللاجئين

bi2éllak raa7 naas taba3 jam3iyyaat kheeriyye yshuufu llaaji2iin...

They say that people from charity organisations went to see the refugees...

What triggers use of *تبع* as opposed to the *iDaafe* is not always clear. It's common with compounds and with loanwords (like the first example here). But it is also often used in contexts where the *iDaafe* would also be fine.

For some speakers *تبع* agrees with the possessed noun. In Syrian this is optional, but in Palestinian for example it is compulsory. The feminine is *تبع* *taba3et*. The plural has various different forms, including *تبعون* *tab3uun* and *تبعوت* *tab3uut*.

Taba3 differs from the *iDaafe* in that it can be used independently, providing the only easy way to translate expressions like 'Ahmad's' or 'mine' where the possessed noun is dropped. As with its normal use, *taba3* here can express all sorts of relationships:

كسرت تبعوتو

kassar@t taba3to

I broke his [one]

بدكن لايف مثل تبع امبارح

béddkon laayv mét@l taba3 @mbaare7?

You want a Live [video] like yesterday's?

بس تبع اللون الاخضر وبنات العمارة شغلة

bass taba3 élloon él2akhDar, wbanaat él3emaara shéghe

Only the green one, [because] the architecture girls are something else [in response to a question about which university canteen students prefer]

طلع تبع الضابط

Téle3 taba3 éDDaabeT

It turned out to belong to the officer/be the officer's!

وينهم تبعون الإنجليش؟

weenhom tab3uun élinglish?

Where are the English crew?

You have to be careful with this usage, however, because *تبع* is also a euphemism for genitalia.

Open conditionals

As in fuSHa, *iza* is used for ‘open conditionals’ like ‘if it rains, we can go’ or ‘if he’s not happy, let him come and see me’. Unlike fuSHa, any tense form can appear in the conditional clause:

إذا بدك فيني احكي معو
iza béddak fiini é7ki ma3o
if you want I can talk to him

إذا بتشوفو بكرأ خبرني
iza bétshuufu bukra khabbérni
if you see him tomorrow tell me

The past can be used with future meaning in the conditional clause as in fuSHa. For some people at least this implies a less certain emphasis on likelihood (allowing for more politeness – ‘if you happen to be free [but no pressure]’):

إذا فضيت خبرني
iza fDiit khabbérni
if you’re free (= become free) then tell me

It can also be used with actual past meaning, as in the following sentence. Note that usually ‘if he left’ in English is actually *hypothetical*, and does not have a past but a non-factual meaning (‘if he left now he’d...’), which would be translated typically with *لو* and not *إذا*.⁷ However, on some rare occasions it expresses an open conditional (i.e. whose fulfilment is possible) where the action fulfilling the condition must have happened in the past:

إذا طلع امبارح بوصل بكرأ
iza Téle3 @mbaare7 biwaSSel élyoom
if he left yesterday, he’ll get there today

In the literal opposite of fuSHa, the result clause cannot (typically) be in the past directly. As in English – where we have to say ‘if he left yesterday, he’ll have arrived today’ (and ‘if he left yesterday he arrived today’ is a bit odd) we have to use a construction with *بكون* to express an assumption:

إذا طلع امبارح بكون وصل اليوم
iza Téle3 @mbaare7 bikuun waSSal élyoom
if he left yesterday he’ll’ve got there today

Sometimes *iza* is dropped:

دفعت هلق شو بصير؟
dafa3@t halla2, shu biSiir?
(if) I paid now, what would happen

⁷ This distinction is made in one place in formal English using different verb forms – ‘if he were at the party I’d say hi to him’ vs ‘if he was at the party, it must have been him I saw’. But even this distinction is lost for a lot of us in speech, unfortunately for those trying to get their heads around Arabic forms.

Hypothetical and counterfactual conditionals

As in fuSHa, لو is used for counterfactuals.⁸ Counterfactual sentences refer to hypothetical situations that would/could be the case now (present counterfactuals) or would/could have been the case in the past (past counterfactuals) if a given condition were fulfilled/had been fulfilled. In both cases, it is assumed that the condition is unlikely or impossible to be fulfilled or has not been fulfilled.

In Levantine Arabic, this is the most basic use of *law* – similar to MSA (though *iza* is also sometimes used like this). These sorts of sentences, and the exact syntax of *law*, are subject to quite a lot of dialectal variation, but the basic principles stay the same.

The if-clause

In English, both parts of the conditional sentence – the if-clause and the result clause – both change for tense. This is not the case in Syrian and Lebanese, where the if-clause typically takes the simple past tense whatever, with tense being indicated by the result clause:

لو درس بينجح
law daras byénja7
If he studied, he'd do well.

لو درس كان نجح
law daras kaan néje7
If he **had** studied, he'd **have** done well.

A nominal ('to be') sentence can take *kaan* in a similar way – which depending on dialect may or may not be conjugated. In most situations, though, it's more common to drop it. Some speakers reject the presence of *kaan* as ungrammatical or awkward, depending on their region.

لو (كان) أينشتاين لبناني كان هاجر على غير بلد
law (kaan) aynshtaayn lébnaani kaan haajar 3ala gheer balad
If Einstein **had been** Lebanese he'd've emigrated to another country

لو (كنت) محلك ببقى بالبيت
law ként ma7allak béb2a bi-lbeet
If I **were** you I'd stay at home

The same applies to quasi-verbal expressions like *ma3i*, *bédidi*, *3éendi* and participles:

لو معي بعطيك
law ma3i ba3Tiik
If **I had** [money] on me **I'd** give you [some]

لو كان كاتبين ثالث او رابع واحد كان رح يكون حلو
law (kaan) kaatbiin taalet aw raabe3 waa7ed kaan ra7 ykuun 7élw
If they'd **written** the third or fourth one it **would've been** nice

A similar case concerns 'stative' verbs, like sentences which discuss ability or possibility, where an implied (dropped) *kaan* may result in a present tense verb with *b-* following *law*.

⁸ Some Syrians use *iza* synonymously with *law* and with the same syntax for counterfactuals, but this is non-standard:

إذا بدو يفور دمو كان فار من زمان
iza béddo yfuur dammo kaan faar mén zamaan

If he was going to go crazy [= if his blood was going to boil over], it would have happened a long time ago.

لو بحبو بعض كانو تجوزو من زمان

law bi7ébbu ba3D kaanu tjawwazu mén zamaan

If they **loved** one another they'd have got married a long time ago

لو بعرف ما كنت اشتريتلك ياه

law ba3ref maa ként @shtareetéllak yaa

If I'd **known**, I wouldn't have bought it for you

لو بيدرس بينجح

law byédros byénja7

If he **was** a studious sort/the type that studied, he'd succeed (contrasting with *law daras* 'if he studied')

لو كانت الغفوات تنقاس بالأيام .. يعني انا نعسان غ قد مية عام

law kaanet ilghafawaat tén2aas bi-l2iyyaam... ya3ni 2ana na3saan 3a 2add miit 3aam

If naps **were** measured in days, then I'd **be** 100 years worth of sleepy.⁹

لو بيحكو الحيوانات شو بقولو؟

law byé7ku l7eewaanaat shuu bi2uulu?

If animals **could talk** what **would they** say?

This has a different meaning from the same sentence with a past verb:

لو حكو الحيوانات شو بقولو؟

law 7aku l7eewaanaat shuu bi2uulu?

If the animals **were to talk** [on a specific occasion], what **would they** say?

law can be followed by *énno* 'that', with no significant change in meaning. *énno* can take suffixed pronouns:

لو اني رجعتون ما كان صار اللي صار

law énni rajja3ton maa kaan Saar élli Saar

If I'd taken them back what happened **wouldn't have** happened!

It is possible to follow *law* with a subjunctive verb in a hypothetical conditional.¹⁰ This is linked to the meaning 'if only' discussed below. Unlike *law jiiit*, which can be either past ('if you had come') or present/future ('if you came'), *law téji* can only have future reference ('if you came/if you were to come') and implies unlikelihood.

لو نجي على تركيا بتستفاد كتير

law téji 3ala turkiyya btéstafaad @ktiir

If you'd only come to Turkey, you'd benefit a lot

The result clause

The result clause varies much more than the if-clause in possible structure.

Present counterfactuals

The simplest kind of present counterfactual has a *b*-prefixed present tense verb in the result clause, with an optional *kaan* in front of it:

⁹ This is an unusual example of this *kaan* triggering subjunctive. Normally it appears with a *b*-present.

¹⁰ You might hear some speakers using subjunctives with stative verbs too, like *law a3ref* 'if I knew'. This is, however, just a variation on the *law ba3ref* above and should not be considered the same as this.

لو كنت محلك ببقى بالبيت
law (ként) ma7allak béb2a bi-lbeet
If I **were** you I'd stay at home

لو كان المناخ انشف بشوي يكون احسن بكثير
law (kaan) élmanaakh anshaf bi-shweyy bikuun a7san bi-ktiir
If the climate **was** a bit drier, it **would be** much better

لو كنتي مشتاقتي كنتي بتيجي لعنا
law (kénti) méshtaa2tii-li kénti btiiji la-3éndi
If you really **missed** me you'd come and see me.

The future can also be used in the result clause, again with optional *kaan*:

لو راحت ع الشام رح اعرف كل شي!
law raa7et 3a shshaam, ra7-a3ref kéll shi!
If she'd gone to Damascus, I'd [lit. have been going to] find out everything (but she went to Homs).

لو ما كنت عم غني كنت رح كون بالجيش
law maa ként 3am ghanni, ként ra7 kuun bi-jjeesh
If I **wasn't** singing, I **would have been** in the army.

Past counterfactuals

Generally speaking, past counterfactuals have *kaan* plus a past verb in the result clause:

لو اني رجعتون ما كان صار اللي صار
law énni rajja3ton maa kaan Saar élli Saar
If I'd taken them back what happened **wouldn't have** happened!

لو طلعت امبارحة كانت وصلت اليوم
law Tél3et @mbaar7a kaanet wéSlet élyoom
If she'd left yesterday she **would have** got here today.

لو كنت بعرف انو هيك رح يصير لا كنت جبتيك ولا كنت وعدتك انو بدني رجعتك
law **ként** ba3ref 2énno heek ra7 ySiir **laa ként** jébték **wélla ként** wa3adtek 2énno béddi rajj3ek
If I'd known this would happen, I **wouldn't have** brought you nor would I have promised you that I'd take you back.

لو معي كنت عطيتك
law ma3i ként 3aTeetak
If I'd **had** [money] on me I'd **have** given you [some].

لو بعرف ما رح تقايلي عيب كنت قلنالك بشو بحس لما اطلع على هاي الصورة
law ba3ref maa ra7 t2élii-li 3eeb, ként 2élt-éllek b-shuu b7éss lamma éTTalle3 3ala haay eSSuura
If I **was** sure [lit. knew] you wouldn't tell me it was wrong (to feel this way), I **would have** told you how I feel when I look at this picture...

Other uses of law

Wlaw 'even if'

Wlaw (*walaw*)¹¹, *7atta law*, *7atta wlaw* and sometimes just *law* can all mean ‘even if’. They generally have similar structure to normal hypotheticals:

ولو ما درس بينجج

w-law maa daras byénja7

Even if he **didn’t** study he’d (still) do well

Unlike normal sentences with *law*, however, the ‘even if’ meaning is not restricted to hypotheticals and counterfactuals:

ولو الحيت علي ماني رح ايجي

w-law ala77eet 3aliyyi maani ra7 iiji

Even if you **insist**, I’m **not** coming!

صامدين لو بدنا نموت بالجوع

Saamdiin law béddna nmuut bi-jjoo3

We’re staying here, even if we’ll starve

Some speakers accept present tense verbs here, presumably in a non-counterfactual meaning:

لو بيضربني ما بقبل

law byédrébni maa bé2bal

Even if he **beats** me I **won’t** agree

‘If only’

Law can be used with the subjunctive or the *b*-present in a meaning similar to ‘I wish’ or ‘if only’:¹²

لو تعرف قديش بحبك!

law ta3ref 2addeesh b7ébbak!

If you only knew how much I love you!

لو منقدر نوصل للناس الي بقلب الصور

law mné2der nuuSal la-nnaas élli b-2alb eSSuwar

If only we could reach the people in pictures..

These can also have result clauses:

لو يحكيلو كلمة واحدة بتتحل المشكلة

law yé7kii-lo kélme waa7de btén7all élmésh@kle!

If only he’d say something for once the problem would be solved

¹¹ *Walaw* with an *a* in the first syllable has a number of other meanings that can be confused with this meaning, including ‘really?’ (*walaw éstaaz?*), ‘no problem’ and (confusingly) ‘of course’: *walaw b2uula 2ana* ‘of course I say [that word]!’

¹² Some Lebanese speakers use *law* + subjunctive, confusingly enough, in the meaning of *iza* – for example in the Nancy Ajram couplet:

صدفة لو على هالطريق يسلم علي شي رفيق

Sédfi law 3ala ha-7Tarii2 ysalleem 3aliyyi shi rfii2

And if by chance on the street a friend should say hello to me...

لو بس بتقللي شو في ممكن ساعدك

law bass @t2él-li shuu fii mémken saa3dak!

If you'd just say what's wrong I might be able to help you.

In a similar sense, *law* often appears in combination with other expressions of hope:

في أغاني بتمنى لو صوتي حلو عشان غنيها للشخص اللي بحبو

fii 2aghaani bétmanna law Sooti 7élw 3ashaan ghanniiha la-shshakhS élli b7ébbo

There are some songs that [make me] wish that my voice was nice so I could sing them to the person I love.

يا ريت لو طلعت على بريطانيا

yaa reet law @Tlé3@t 3ala breTaanya

I wish I'd gone to Britain...

ألوس يا ريت لو فيني إجي لبنان واحضرك بكر

alluus yaa reet law fiyyi iiji lébnaan w é7Darek bukra

Alissa my love, I wish I could come to Lebanon and watch you tomorrow

الكبار بالعمر إذا حيوكي بيقولوك يا ريت لو عنا ابن بعمرك لنزورك ياه،

lékbaar bi-l3ém@r iza 7abbuuki bi2uuluu-lek yaa reet law 3énna ib@n b-3émrak la-nzawwjek yaah

Old people if they like you, they say I wish we had a son your age so we could marry him off to you

Other conditional expressions

Conditions with no 'if'

As in English there are a few constructions that can take the place of a normal 'condition' clause:

محلي محللك ببقى بالبيت

ma7alli ma7allak béb2a bi-lbeet

If I were in your place [= my place were your place], I'd stay at home

عجبك ولا ما عجبك رح سويا

3éjbak wélla maa 3éjbak ra7 sawwiyya

Like it or not, I'm doing it

-ever expressions

'Whatever', 'whoever', 'however', 'however' are all formed by adding *-ma* or *-man* to the end of question words. They can take either present or past verbs without tense implications:

شو من كان

shu man kaan

whatever it may be

شلون ما كان

shloon maa kaan

however it may be

مين ما اجي
miin ma éja
whoever comes/came

The equivalent for قديش is irregular قد ما *2add ma* ‘however (much)’:

الزلمة قد ما كان قلبو طيب بضل اهيل
ézzalame 2add ma kaan 2albo Tayyeb béDéll 2ahbal
The guy’s still an idiot, no matter how good a heart he has

In Syrian at least *law* can appear before these expressions. Here it has no additional meaning and can be deleted:

بتوظف لو شو ما كنت دارس.. ما هيك؟
bétwaZZaf law shu ma ként daares... maa heek?
I can get a job no matter what I’ve studied... Right?

The more, the more

The expression used for ‘the more... the more’ (a kind of conditional expression) is كل ما... كل *kéll* *ma... kéll ma...*:

السيارة كل ما بتكون اعلی كل ما بتكون احسن
ésséyyaara kéll ma bétkuun 2aghla kéll ma bétkuun a7san
the more expensive a car is, the better it is

كل ما درسنا كل ما حسيت حالي اجذب
kell ma darasna kéll ma 7asseet 7aali ajdab
the more we study/studied, the more I felt/feel like an idiot

Taalama ‘as long as’

Taalama can also introduce conditional clauses which may have past verbs:

طالما راضيتني ما بتطلع من عندي الا راضيان
Taalama raaDeetni maa btéTla3 mén 3éndi 2élla réDyaan
As long as you keep me happy, I’ll keep you happy [= you won’t leave me except happy]

Relative clauses

Definites

As in fuSHa, relative clauses require a relativising particle when attached to a definite noun and no particle if attached to an indefinite noun. Unlike fuSHa – where this particle declines for case, gender, and number – in colloquial it is invariable, either *élli/illi* or *yalli* (depending on speaker and region):

الرجال اللي بعرفو
érréjjaal élli ba3rfo
the man I know

البنيت يلي شفتها فاييت عالبناية
élbén@t yalli shéfta faayte 3a-lbinaaye
the girl you saw going into the building

اليوم من الأيام اللي ما بقدر احكي فيها
élyoom mn él2éyyaam élli maa bé2der é7ki fiyya
today is one of those days I can't talk about

élli/illi's initial vowel drops when preceded by a vowel, as if it was the definite article:

انا اسفة عاللي صار امبارح
ana 2aasfe 3a-lli Saar @mbaare7
I'm sorry for what happened yesterday

Note that just like in fuSHa, a pronoun has to appear in the relative clause in the place of the noun you've 'extracted' unless it is the subject of the relative clause (I saw the girl who I know *her*), either as a direct object or attached to a pronoun.

élli/illi is sometimes shortened to *él-/il-*. In this case it looks the same as the definite article, but does not assimilate to sun letters:

شو الفكرة الأخدينا عن السوريين؟
shu élfékra él-2aakhdiina 3an éssuuriyyiin?
what do you think about Syrians? [= what's the idea you've taken...]

élli is also used where *man* and *maa* are used in fuSHa as relative pronouns for 'the one who' and 'the thing that'/'what' (ما الموصولة). Whilst in fuSHa a direct object pronoun in the relative clause here is optional, with *élli* it is compulsory:

انا اسفة عاللي صار امبارح
ana 2aasfe 3a-lli Saar @mbaare7
I'm sorry for what happened yesterday

اللي بدك ياه
élli béddak yaa
what you want

اللي صايرة بالبلد
élli Saayre bi-lbalad
what's happened in the country

انا هيك اللي عاجبو عاجبو واللي ما عاجبو ينساان
ana heek. élli 3aajbo 3aajbo wélli muu 3aajbo yénsaani
this is how I am – those who it pleases it pleases and those who it doesn't please
should forget me

Relative clauses are often used for emphasis, lining up with English 'it's... who...' or 'it's... that...':

شو اللي بدك ياه بالذات
shuu lli béddak yaah bizzaat
What exactly is it that you want

انا اللي عطلت الاصنوصير
ana lli 3aTTalt él2asonSeer
It was me who broke the lift, I'm the one who broke the lift

Indefinites

Indefinite nouns require no particle, as in fuSHa:

واحد اسمو جان
waa7ed ésmo jaan
a guy whose name is Jaan

واحد بيعرف انجليزي
waa7ed bya3ref ingliizi
a guy who knows English

When the indefinite noun in question is not only grammatically indefinite but also does not refer to a specific thing, the relative clause has the *b*-less verb form:

بدي بنت تعرف انجليزي
béddi bén@t ta3ref ingliizi
I want a girl who speaks English

This contrasts with a sentence like عم دور على بنت بتحكي انجليزي, which would also translate as 'I'm looking for a girl who speaks English' – but in this case the speaker has a specific girl in mind they are looking for. This distinction is basically identical to one found in French and explained at length [here](#). The use of these sorts of relative clauses often lines up with 'an X to Y' structures in English:

شباك اهرب منو
shébbak éhrob ménno
a window to escape from

مفتاح افتح فيه هالباب
méftaa7 éfta7 fii ha-lbaab
a key to open/with which I can open this door

Structures with ma

The particle *ma* can be attached to a number of nouns, producing constructions that translate as English relative clauses even though they are not strictly speaking relative clauses in Arabic. These structures have no equivalent in fuSHa:

لحظة *la7Zet ma* – the moment that

وقت *wa2@t ma* – the time that (when)

يوم *yoom ma* – the day that (when)

ساعة *saa3et ma* – the hour that (when)

محل ما, قرنة *ma7all ma, 2érnet ma/2urnet ma* – the place that

Most productively this appears with superlatives:

أحسن ما يمكن *a7san ma yémken* – as good as/the best possible

اقرب ما يكون *a2rab ma ykuun* – as close as/the closest there is

Agreement

When a pronoun is used before a relative clause, the verb in the clause usually agrees with that pronoun (unlike in modern English, which usually puts the relative clause in the third person whatever):

انا يلي عطلت الاسونسير
ana yalli 3aTTalt él2asoonseer
I'm the one who broke the lift

انا الي يعرف
ana lli ba3ref!
of course I know (I'm the one who knows!)

With certain expressions like *X mén noo3 él-... élli* (X is the type of... who'), you sometimes see odd agreement patterns with the subject rather than with the noun the relative clause is actually attached to:

سوسن من نوع البنات يلي بيتغنى عنها
sawsan mén noo3 élbanaat yalli byétghanna 3anha
Sawsan is the type of girl that you hear about in songs (= that is sung about)

Other ‘That’-clauses

Anybody who has studied fuSHa will probably have torn at least a little bit of hair out over the uses and abuses of *أَنَّ* and *أَنْ*. You’ll be happy to know that in colloquial there is only one ‘that’, *إنّو* *énno/inno*, which is used in place of all of these. *إنّو* can take other pronoun suffixes in place of the *-o*, like fuSHa *anna*, but the form with *-o* can stand in for other pronouns as well.

Statements of fact

For normal statements of fact or assertions, all tenses can appear in that-clauses:

مش متأكد بس بعتمد انو هيدا المحل ببرج حمود
mish mit2akked bass bé3ta2ed énno heeda lma7all @bbérj 7ammuud
I’m not sure but I think this shop is in Burj Hammou’

بدي قللك انو بحبك
béddi 2él-lak énno b7ébbak
I want to tell you that I love you

مين قللك انو راح؟
miin 2él-lak énno raa7?
who told you that he’s gone?

Unlike English, spoken Arabic does not usually have ‘[backshifting](#)’ or sequence of tenses where the tense in a that-clause changes depending on the tense of the main clause – ‘he says he’ll come’ but ‘he told me he would come’. In the following examples, for example, the that-clause has present marking but is translated with past because of the tense of the main verb:

قال انو مرضان
2aal énno marDaan
he said he was ill

حلمت انو عم نظم و نظف غرفة نوم جدتي
7lém@t 2énno 3am naZZem w naZZef ghérfet noom jéddti
I dreamt I was tidying and cleaning my grandma’s bedroom

A future verb is then interpreted as future-in-past:

قللي رح ييجي بعد ساعة
2él-li ra7 yijji ba3@d saa3a
he told me he’d come after an hour

A past verb is typically interpreted as pluperfect, although occasionally it lines up with English:

قلتلك اني رجعت
2éltéllak énni rjé3@t
I told you I'd come back

حلمت اني كنت بالجنة
7lém@t énni ként bijjanne
I dreamt I was in heaven [this one has tense-shifting]

Subjunctives

There are quite a lot of cases where *énno* comes before an expression of a wish or a hope or something similarly subjunctive-y and is thus followed by the subjunctive:

بتمنى انو يعجبكم
batmanna inno yi3jebkom
I hope you like it

الى حابب انو يتعلم بيت بوكس يحكي معي
illi 7aabeeb inno yit3allam biit boks yi7ki ma3i
those (anyone) who want to learn to beatbox should speak to me

عبوده خايف انو ناكلو
3abbuude khaayef énni naaklo!
Abboudeh is worried we're going to eat him!

'For X to...'

انو plus a *b*-less verb is also used very commonly in a construction which is similar in usage to fuSHa's أن *an* + subjunctive. This structure replaces a *maSdar* and can be used with adjectives:

بس انك تفوت ع البيت بلا ما اعرف
bass énnak @tfuut 3albeet bala ma a3ref ...
but for you to come into the house without me knowing...

كثير صعب انو حدا منحبو كثير.. يسقط من عيننا فجأة
ktiir Sa3b énni 7ada mén7ébbo ktiir yés2oT mén 3eenna faj2a
it's very difficult for someone we really love to suddenly [do something to] lose our respect

Obviously this same structure is not always best translated with English 'for X to'. Sometimes there are more elegant ways of doing it, especially when the adjective comes first:

مستحيل انك تجي
musta7iil énnak tiiji
it's impossible that you'll come

Generally the *énno* can be dropped when comes after the adjective:

ما اصعبها نهاية غرامك تكتبها بايدك

ma2aS3aba nihaayet gharaamak téktéba b2iidak

how difficult it is to write your love's end with your own hand

In expressions with comparatives, *énno* is used with a *b*-less verb to compare sentences (in English we have to use a gerund for this):

احسن من انو تدفع المبلغ كلو دفشة واحدة

a7san mén énnó tédfa3 élmablagh kélló dafshe waa7de

better than paying the whole thing all in one go

When comparing two actions, however, the form *ménma* منما is used instead:

بحكي احسن منما بفهم

bé7ki a7san ménma béfham

I speak better than I understand

Exceptions with *élli*

Although *élli* is usually a relative pronoun, with a few adjectives expressing feelings it can be used instead of *إنو*:

منيح اللي ذكرتني

mnii7 élli zakkartni

it's good you reminded me

مبسوط اللي جيت

mabsuuT élli jiit

I'm happy you came

MaSdars and nouns of instance

MaSdars (مصادر) or verbal nouns are very common in fuSHa. cursory treatments of 3aamiyye (usually the same ones that claim that all 3aamiyye sentences are subject-verb-object or that the grammar is ‘very simplified fuSHa’) usually claim that the maSdar simply isn’t used in colloquial. There is an element of truth to this in that certain very common uses of the maSdar in fuSHa are usually or always replaced by structures with conjugated verbs:

قبل ما يوصل > قبل وصوله – before he gets here

أحب أقرأ > أحب القراءة – I like reading

However, this doesn’t mean that the maSdar isn’t used at all (or the اسم مرّة or noun of instance which we’ll also deal with here). This post will deal with the places that they are common.

Formation of maSdars

As in fuSHa, maSdars are unpredictably formed. This goes especially for form I verbs, where they can take any number of shapes (عصيان, كتابة, نسي) although there are a few very common patterns (particularly *fa3l*). A number of verbs which also exist in fuSHa have different (often regular) common maSdars in 3aamiyye: نسي *nési* is usually نسي *nasy* ‘forgetfulness’, for example (and not e.g. نسيان which is instead the participle).

ضرب *Dar@b* ‘hitting’

نسي *nasy* ‘forgetting’

عزف *3azaf* ‘playing’

جنان *jnaan* ‘going crazy. madness’

It also applies, as in fuSHa (think *takallama* > *kalaam*) to some verbs in other forms as well:

دور على *dawwar 3ala* ‘look for’ > دواره *dwaara* ‘looking for’

The form III pattern *mufaa3ala* has a fully Shami equivalent in *mfaa3ale*:

شارك *shaarak* ‘go into partnership with’ > مشاركة *mshaarake* ‘going into partnership’

ساعد *saa3ad* ‘help’ > مساعدة *msaa3ade* ‘help’

There are also a few regular forms (in 3aamiyye) which nonetheless do not line up with their equivalent forms in fuSHa. Form II defective verbs for example have maSdars in *té3aaye* (or in Pal/Jor, *tif3aay*):

عَبَّى *3abba* ‘to fill’ > *té3baaye* ‘filling’

سَلَّى *salla* ‘to entertain’ > تسلية *téslaaye* ‘entertainment’

The regular form for all quadriliteral verbs with the *t-* prefix is *fa3lane*:

تولدن *twaldan* ‘act childish’ > ولدنة *waldane* ‘acting childish’

تحيون *t7eewan* ‘act like a moron’ > 7eewane ‘acting like a moron’.

Finally, some verbs have both colloquial and fuSHa *maSdars* used in different contexts:

قرأ *2ara* ‘read’ > قراءة *qiraa2a, 2raaye* ‘reading’

MaSdars are best learnt individually with each verb.

اسم مرة Formation of the

The formation of the noun of instance is simple and identical to fuSHa. All nouns of instance take the form *fa3le* (or *fa3we*, *foo3a* etc for defective and hollow verbs). These nouns express the meaning of a single instance of the verb:

ضربة *Darbe* ‘a blow’, ‘a hit’, ‘a strike’ etc (contrast with ضرب *Darb* ‘hitting’)

خطوة *khaTwe* ‘a step’, ‘a single act of stepping’ (contrast with خطو *khaTw* ‘stepping’)

Most nouns of instance are derived from form I verbs. Generally the *maSdar* can be used in the sense of a noun of instance for non-form I verbs.

Normal gerund uses

Although as discussed above there are some fuSHa contexts where the *maSdar* is not much used – particularly where in fuSHa it stands in for a normal sentence (e.g. (بعد وصوله للمطار) – it is quite commonly used as a gerund that lines up with the English usage:

بحب القراءة

b7ébb élqiraa2a

I like reading (equivalent to (بحب اقرى

القراءة صعبة

élqiraa2a Sa3be

reading is hard

المشي مفيد للضغط

élmashy mufiid la-DDagh@T

walking is good [= useful] for blood pressure

The noun of instance is also used (intuitively) in expressions like the following:

اخي منتبه انو فوتاتي ع المحل كتر انة

akhi méntabeh éнно footaati 3a-lma7all kétraane

my brother has noticed that I’m coming here a lot [= that my entrances... have become more]

هلحكي بالروحة ولا بالرجعة؟

ha-l7aki bé-rroo7a wélla bé-rraj3a?

was this on the way there or on the way back? [= is this talk in the going or the returning?]

قديش بتدفع روحة رجعة؟

2addeesh btédfa3 roo7a raj3a?

how much do you pay there and back?

As mentioned with normal nouns, some verbs always take indefinite direct objects. This includes maSdars, which appear with verbs like the following in a construction quite similar to the English:

كامل حكي *kammel 7aki* – keep on talking

وقف اكل *wa22ef ak@l* – stop eating

خلصت قراءة *khallaSt @2raaye* – I’ve finished reading

Cognate accusative

More interesting is its usage in the مفعول مطلق (cognate accusative) structure, whose existence in *3aamiyye* is usually denied wholesale. In fact it is quite common, especially with accompanying adjectives (very commonly مرتب *mrattab*, literally ‘tidy’) and especially especially when telling stories colourfully. Of course, these nouns do not take accusative case marking since cases do not exist in *3aamiyye*:

ضربتو ضرب مرتب

Darabto Dar@b mrattab

I gave him a real beating [= beat him a tidy beating]

عم تدور على مشاكل دوارة

3am @tdawwer 3ala mashaakel @dwaara

you’re looking really hard for problems [= searching a searching]

حكيت حكي ما بينحكي

7akeet 7aki maa byén7aka

I said things that shouldn’t be said [= talked talking that is not talked]

مسكوني مسك اليد

méskuuni mask élyad

they caught me red-handed [= the catching of the hand]

The noun of instance can also be used here (when it exists), giving a slightly different meaning of a single instance:

هلق روح نملك احلى نومة

halla2 ruu7 némlak a7la noome

now go and have a lovely sleep [= the nicest sleeping]

هاد اكيد بكون ابوه هابشلو شي هبشة مرتبه واشترالو السيارة

haad akiid bikuun abuu haabéshlo shi habshe mrattabe w-@shtaraalo éssiyyaara

no, this guy's dad must have got his hands on a nice little deal and bought him the car
[= will have got a tidy getting]

These can be counted:

ضربني تلت ضربات

Darabni tlét Darbaat

he hit me three times (= تلت مرات)

Some maSdars can be used in the same construction as the *maf3uul muTlaq* but with a different verb from the one they are derived from. The most common of these refer to motion. Note that whilst the idiomatic and the literal translations could have ‘-ing’, the English ‘-ing’ of the literal translation is the -ing of the gerund (‘running is good for you’) and not of the participle (‘I’m running’) – that is, the English forms are identical but the Arabic words here are maSdars, not participles:

نروح مشي؟

nruu7 mashy?

shall we walk there? [= go a walking]

جينا ركيد

jiina rgiid

we ran here [= we came a running]

مو جاييتيني لهون شحط مشان تقايلي هيك حكي

muu jaayebtiini lahoon shaH@T mishaan t2éliili heek 7aki?

surely you haven’t dragged me here just to tell me this nonsense? [= you haven’t brought me here a dragging to tell me this sort of speech?]

Passive

The fuSHa internal passive (e.g. دُرسَ) is not productive in Shami, although it exists in a number of commonly used set expressions and classicisms and may be used when someone is speaking in elevated language, fuSHa-style. This may seem like good news, but in fact it is not; the passive in Shami is actually much less regular than fuSHa as a result and not all verbs have a passive form.

Conjugation

Generally, although not exclusively, form I verbs correspond to an equivalent passive on form VII (*nfa3al*) or less commonly form VIII (*fta3al*):

قرأ انقري *2ara n2ara* ‘read, to be read’

مسك انمסק *méseek nmasak* ‘catch, to be caught’

نسيت انتسى *nési ntasa* ‘forget, be forgotten’

Form II and form III verbs usually correspond to a passive on forms V and VI:

تغير غيّر *ghayyar tghayyar* ‘change, be changed’

تصاحب صاحب *Saa7ab tSaa7ab* ‘date, be dated’

Form X verbs, and form V and VI verbs with a non-passive meaning, do not usually have a passive, although there are some exceptions:

انحملت حمل *t7ammal n7amal* ‘bear, be borne’

As in fuSHa, the passive equivalent of an active verb usually has as its subject the direct object of a verb. If the verb normally takes an object with a preposition, the preposition is retained and the verb remains in the masculine singular. If the subject does not follow the preposition directly a pronoun stands in for it:

ما بينمشي معها
maa byénmasha ma3a
she’s impossible to get along with

ما بينهرب من هالسجن
maa byénhareb mén has-séj@n
you can’t escape from this prison [= is not escaped from]

بدي تخت ينام فيه
béddi takh@t yénnaam fii
I want a bed that can be slept in [= is slept in it]

Usage

The passive is often used in a way that lines up with English:

لو انمستكت ما بعرف شو كان صار فيني

law @nmasak@t maa ba3ref shu kaan Saar fiini

if I'd been caught I don't know what would have happened to me

Its more idiomatic use which is very common in colloquial is to express things that should or should not be/can or cannot be done:

شغلات ما بتتحكى

shéghlaat maa btén7aka

things that should not be said

الزلمة ما بيتقاوى عليه

ézzalame maa byét2aawa 3alee

the guy can't be overpowered

ولله خطك ما بينقرى

waLLah khaTTak maa byén2ara

I swear to God, your handwriting is incomprehensible

ما في ولا بنت تتصاحب

maa fii wala bént tétSaa7ab

there's not a single girl worth getting together with

With many expressions it can be used in a way that distances an agent from an action, similar to English 'I can't get X to...'

ما عم ينفتح معي

maa 3am yénfate7 ma3i

I can't get it to open

Reflexives

The reflexive pronoun

In English we have the reflexive pronouns formed with possessives and ‘self’, and in fuSHa we have basically the same system with نفس ‘spirit’ plus possessive pronouns. Whilst there are contexts in which you might hear نفس with reflexive meaning in colloquial, far and away the most common reflexive pronoun in Shami is not formed with نفس but with حال plus possessive pronouns:

احكي عن حالك
é7ki 3an 7aalak
speak for yourself!

ليش عم تجاكر حالك؟
leesh 3am @tjaaker 7aalak?
why are you spiting yourself?

مفكر حالو شي خرية كبيرة
mfakker 7aalo shi kharye kbiire
he thinks he’s the shit [some big shit]

With plural pronouns *7aal* remains the same and does not pluralise like English ‘self’:

شايفين حالون
shaayfiin 7aalon
they’re arrogant [they’ve seen themselves]

The same word is used in لحال *la7aal*- ‘on X’s own’:

فتح لخالو
fata7 la7aalo
it opened on its own

قاعد لخالك
2aa3ed la7aalo
sitting on your own

And in the expression خليه بحالو ‘leave him alone’.

Reflexives without *7aal*

In some limited situations normal pronouns are used with a reflexive meaning:

غصبين عنك *ghaSbin 3annak* – in spite of yourself

Reflexive-style verbs

There are some verbs which in and of themselves are often best translated as reflexive despite the absence of a reflexive pronoun:

احترق *7tara2@t* – I burnt myself

انتحر *nta7ar* – he killed himself (نحر ‘to slaughter’)

Reciprocals

These are expressions like ‘they hit one another’ where the action is being carried out by two parties on one another at the same time.

The reciprocal pronoun

Lining up with English ‘one another’ or ‘each other’, fuSHa has various expressions formed with بعض, probably originally in the sense of ‘some’ (like the long fuSHa structure, ضرب بعضهم البعض, which probably originally meant ‘some of them hit some [others]’ or ‘one of them hit the [other]’). In Syrian the most common way of phrasing it is just to use بعض *ba3@D* on its own as a catchall ‘one another’ or ‘each other’:

ضربو بعض *Darabu ba3@D* – they hit one another

مثل بعض *mét@l ba3@D* – like one another, similar

نفس بعض *naf@s ba3@D* – the same thing, the same as one another

طلعو ببعض *TTalla3u bba3@D* – they looked at one another

Reciprocal verbs

As in fuSHa, some verbs are inherently reciprocal, typically form V or form VI:

تصالحو *tSaala7u* – they made up (with one another – compare صالحو *Saala7o* ‘he made up with him’)

تذاكرو *t7aaku* – they spoke (with one another compare حاكاه ‘he spoke to him’)

When they are really reciprocal the subject is usually plural. However, there are lots of cases where these reciprocals actually may appear with a singular subject and an object expressed with مع. Here, of course, ‘one another’ is not an appropriate translation.

تصالحت معو *tSaala7@t ma3o* – I made up with him (functionally a synonym of صالحو)

Causatives

You've probably already encountered the idea of the causative (make someone do something) in fuSHa with reference to forms II (*fa33ala*) and IV (*2af3ala*) of the verb. In many ways causatives work similarly in fuSHa and in colloquial, but the structures are a bit different and causatives are perhaps more common in dialect.

Unlike English, which distinguishes compulsorily between 'make' and 'let' (both kinds of causative), Arabic combines the two under one basic causative. The causative can be formed with *khalla* plus a verb or with an independent verb form – both can mean either 'let X do' or 'make X do', or related meanings.

خلي *khalla*

Khalla ykhalli is probably derived from the fuSHa for 'to empty', but it is used in the sense of 'allow' or 'make'. It is combined with an object and a verb conjugated in the *b*-less present, quite simply:

خليتو يفوت *khalleeto yfuut* 'I made him go in', 'I let him go in'.

خلاني اقرا *khallaani é2ra* 'he made me read', 'he let me read'

خلوني روح *khalluuni ruu7* 'let me go!'

It can also be used in a way that is not a command but expresses a suggestion, similar to English 'let's':

خلينا نجرب *khalliina njarreb* 'let's give it a go'

It can also mean 'leave' or 'keep':

خليها معك *khalliyya ma3ak* 'keep it with you'

Relatedly, it can mean 'stay', 'keep on' etc, in which case the singular masculine imperative is combined with pronouns indicating the subject:

خليك دغري *khalliik déghri* – (you) keep going straight on

خليكون هون *khalliikon hoon* – (all of you) stay here

Other verbs

There are a few other similar constructions which distinguish between 'making' and 'letting' or have other implications. Their syntax is generally the same:

تركو يمشي *tréko yémshi* 'let him go' (= leave him to go)

جبرني ايجي *jabarni iiji* 'he forced me to come'

Derived verbal forms

Form IV does not really exist in Shami. Some common form IVs have been reanalysed as quadrilateral verbs (اسلم يأسلم *aslam y2aslem* ‘convert to Islam’), others as form I (علن يعلن ‘announce’), one even as form III (آمن يئامن *aaman y2aamen* ‘believe’). A few verbs do act like form IV, with an *a-* in the past tense that disappears in the present, but these are probably recent reborrowings from fuSHa. But Form II is the only productive way of forming causatives, and it is very common (although by no means are all form IIs causative).

Form IIs often have a bewildering number of possible idiomatic English translations. Most have an underlying/equivalent non-causative verb, usually either form I or form V:

فوّت *fawwat* ‘let in’, ‘put in’, ‘take inside’ etc < فات *faat* ‘enter’ (this is also used in the sense of ‘miss out on’, ‘let something slip from between your fingers’ – the causative of the fuSHa verb *faat* which is rarely used in colloquial)

سمك *sammak* ‘make thicker, thicken, make wider’ etc < سمك *sémek* ‘get thicker’

خفف *khaffaf* ‘lighten, go lighter on, reduce’ etc < خف *khaff* ‘get lighter’

مشى *mashsha* ‘walk [a dog], make walk, make move, let move, let pass’ etc < مشى *méshi* ‘walk, move’

فوّق *fayya2* ‘wake [someone] up’ < فاق *faa2* ‘wake up’

غَيّر *ghayyar* ‘change’ (transitive) < تَغَيَّر *tghayyar* ‘change’ (intransitive – this one can also have a passive meaning ‘be changed/be changeable’, as in التّيكيت ما بيتغَيَّر ‘the ticket can’t be changed’)

جَوّز *jawwaz* ‘marry off, marry (i.e. be the presiding official, religious figure etc at a marriage ceremony)’ (transitive) < تَجَوّز *tjawwaz* ‘get married’

Quite a lot of these forms have, either alongside or instead of their predictable meanings, more specific or idiomatic meanings:

دَرَس *darras* ‘put through school, send to school’, ‘teach’

رَقَص *ra22aS* ‘dance with, get to dance’

لَعَب *la33ab* ‘play with’

سَمَعَ *samma3* ‘let/make hear’, ‘put on [a song]’

تَقَلَّ *ta22al* ‘make heavier’, ‘overdo it’

One common causative-esque use of form II which is not quite the same is to derive verbs meaning ‘to apply a substance’:

دَهَب *dahhab* ‘gild’ (i.e. apply gold to) < ذهب *dahab* ‘gold’

زَيْت *zayyat* ‘oil’ < زيت *zeet* ‘oil’

سكر *sakkar* ‘add sugar to’ < سكر *sékkaar* ‘sugar’

Another occasional causative-like usage which you might come across (although it is more common in form X verbs with *ista-*) is to derive verbs from adjectives meaning ‘consider something X’:

صدق *sadda2* ‘believe’ (i.e. ‘consider true/honest’)

كفر *kaffar* ‘consider an unbeliever, accuse of unbelief’

Occasionally they also have other meanings entirely you should be aware of:

سكر *sakkar* ‘get/make someone drunk’ (< *séker* ‘get drunk’), ‘add sugar to’ (< *sékkaar* ‘sugar’) ‘close’ (no underlying verb)

Finally, there are a few form II verbs that can be both causatives and synonyms of their underlying verb: وقف *wa22af* (intransitive ‘stop, stand’ or transitive ‘stop, make stand’) and وصل *waSSal* (intransitive ‘arrive’ or causative ‘deliver, make arrive’) for example. Watch out for these.

Syntax of causatives is pretty predictable. The subject of the underlying verb becomes its object, and the object of the underlying verb – if there is one – stays as a second object.

سمعت الغنية *séma3 élghanniyye* ‘he listened to the song’ > سمعتو الغنية *samma3to élghanniyye* ‘I played him the song’

غلت المي *ghalet élmooy* ‘the water boiled’ > غليت المي *ghalleet élmooy* ‘I boiled the water’

As with other double object verbs, when both objects are a preposition the carrier *yaa-* is used:

سمعتو ياها *samma3to yaaha* ‘I played it to him’

If the underlying verb takes a preposition, this usually stays:

فهم عليها *féhem 3aleeha* ‘he understood her’ > فهمتو عليها *fahhamto 3aleeha* ‘I made him understand her’ (I explained what she was saying to him)

فات المكتب *faat 3almaktab* ‘he went into the office’ > فواتو المكتب *fawwatto 3almaktab* ‘I took him into the office’

Tamiiz

You are probably familiar with the fun (or not-so-fun) phenomenon of so-called *tamiiz* (تمييز), sometimes translated into English as ‘specification’. In fuSHa, *tamiiz* is one of the many uses of the accusative – you take a noun, stick it in the accusative, and it turns into something that can be (often clunkily) translated as ‘in terms of’ or ‘by way of’. [This handy PDF](#) gives some nice examples: يزداد ايمانًا ‘increase in belief’, يختلف علوًا ‘differ in height’, اجمل اسلوبًا ‘more pleasant with regard to style’. You’re probably most familiar with it from the last usage, with superlatives and comparatives.

Some arguable examples of the fuSHa forms are occasionally used in speech too (كتابةً *kitaabatan* ‘in writing’ for example) especially in higher registers, but productively *tamiiz* constructions are formed in 3aammiyye without any case ending. This makes them more difficult to spot, but lots of examples of similar constructions do occur – and it’s important to understanding that you can recognise them.

Modifying verbs:

Tamiiz constructions often appear modifying verbs in an adverbial sense. They can frequently but not always be translated with English ‘as’:

بشتغل مهندس

bésh téghel muhandes

I work as an engineer (ـك here sounds funny and is a common non-native mistake)

جيت لجوء

jiit lujuu2

I came as a refugee [= I came refuge]

المصاري بجر شيكات

élmaSaari biju sheeka

the money comes in cheques

Sometimes they modify not the verb itself, but the object:

عطاني ياه هدية

3aTaani yaa hdiyye

he gave me it as a present

انت زودت الطين بلة اه

inte zawwad t éTTiin bille aah

you’ve made the situation worse [increased the clay in terms of wetness]

They can modify participles, too – as in the following:

الكاس مليان مي

élkaas mélyaan moyy

the glass is full of water

مبلول مي
mabluul moyy
wet (with water)

compare:

عبيتو مي
3abbeeto moyy
I filled it with water

انبليت مي
nballeet moyy
I got wet

They can also modify the subject:

انقسمو قسمين
n2asamu 2ésmeen
they were divided (into) two groups

I'm not sure my divisions into modifying the subject, object and verb are particularly scientific, but hopefully these examples give a decent impression of the breadth of possible semantics.

With question words

With questions with *2addeesh* ('how much') and *shu* ('what'), there is often a *tamyiiz* which narrows the specification of the question word. Unlike in English ('what houses', 'how much change'), the *tamyiiz* typically appears later on:

قديش معك فراطة؟
2addeesh ma3ak @fraaTa?
how much change do you have? [how much do you have (by way of) change?]

شو عندك افكار لتطوير البلد
shu 3éndak 2afkaar la-taTwiiir élbald?
what ideas do you have for developing the country

They don't necessarily have to be actual questions, either:

الله وحدو بيعلم شو ممكن تجيني أحاسيس و مشاعير
aLLa wa7do bya3lem shu mémken tijiini a7aasiis w mashaa3iir
only God knows what feelings I might have [= what can come to me (by way of) feelings and feelings]

These are of course a subset of the versions above with subjects and objects.

Other uses in fuSHa

In fuSHa *tamyiiz* is also used for expressions of quantity ('a glass of water', 'a kilo of sugar') and for superlatives/comparatives where an *afDal* noun cannot be readily used (أكثر تعقيداً 'more complicated' for example). In *3aammiyye* the former is usually expressed with an *iDaafe* (*kaasét moyy*, *kaast élmoyy*) and the latter with a combination of a normal adjective and an *afDal* (أكثر ممعد *mu3aqqad 2aktar*).

Numbers

In fuSHa numbers are famously terrible and impossible to master. In Shami, they are much better.

One

The number one has two forms: واحد *waa7ed* (in Jor/Pal *waa7ad*) and واحدة *waa7de/wa7de*. As in fuSHa, this typically follows the singular noun as an adjective to emphasise ‘one’:

في شلعة واحدة بس
fii shéghle waa7de bass
there’s just one thing

With certain collective nouns (like foods and currencies) it can be placed before as a counter:

واحدة بيتزا *waa7de biitza* ‘one pizza’

Or it can stand alone, of course:

كام شخص معك؟ واحد
kam shakh@S ma3ak? waa7ed.
how many people do you have with you? one.

واحد *and* and واحدة are very commonly used to mean ‘somebody’ or ‘some guy/some woman’:

معي واحد بتعرفو
ma3i waa7ed bta3rfo
I’ve got a guy here you know

واحدة تانية *waa7de taanye* ‘someone else’, ‘another woman’

قديش ع الواحد؟
addeesh 3a lwaa7ed?
how much per person?

It can also appear with (animate) nouns as a kind of indefinite article:

انت عن جد واحد اهل
inte 3an jadd waa7ed 2ahbal
you really are an idiot

As in fuSHa, the ordinal form (‘first’) is أول *awwal*. This can either appear before the noun like a superlative (أول واحد *awwal waa7ed* ‘the first one’) or after it as in fuSHa, in which case it has a feminine form أولى *uula*.

Two

‘Two’ has two forms: اثنين *tneen* and its feminine equivalent تنتين *ténteem/tinteen*. It can be used to emphasise a dual:

شغلتين تنتين *shégh@lteen ténteem* ‘two things’

تنتين can also be used, unlike in fuSHa, before a plural noun (in which it does not have a feminine):

تنتين اشخاص *tneen ashkhaaS* ‘two people’

In front of certain collective nouns (like foodstuffs, currencies, and collective plurals) it can be used to count:

تنتين بيتزا *tneen biitza* ‘two pizzas’

Its ordinal form is ثاني *taani*, fem. ثانية *taanye*, which can be placed before the noun like a superlative (in which case it has no feminine) or after it as in fuSHa. This doubles up as the normal word for ‘other’:

ثاني واحد *taani waa7ed* ‘the second one’

3-10

Each number from 3-10 has two forms, one used before nouns and one used independently. Although with 3-10 these forms resemble the fuSHa feminine and masculine, they have nothing to do with gender in Shami:

ثلاثة تلات *tlaate tlétt*

اربعة اربع *arba3a arba3*

خمسة خمس *khamse kham@s*

ستة ست *sétte sétt*

سبعة سبع *sab3a sab@3*

ثمانى تمن *tmaani* (*tamaanye* in Jor/Pal) *tmén*

تسعة تسع *tés3a tés@3*

عشرة عشار *3ashara 3ashar*

The counting forms are followed as in fuSHa by plural nouns:

ثمانى اشخاص *tmén ashkhaaS* ‘eight people’

A few common words (*yoom, shahr, alf*) have special plurals (*téyyaam, téshor, taalaaf*) when counted in this fashion:

سبع تالاف *sab@3 taalaaf* ‘seven thousand’

اربع تيام *arba3 téyyaam* ‘four days’

A few sort-of-collective nouns like names of foods, currencies and a few irregular plurals like *3arab* are counted with the full forms:

ثلاثه بيرة *tlaate biira* ‘three beers’

خمسة بوند *khamse boond* ‘five pounds’

The ordinal versions are as expected: *taalet raabe3 khaames saades saabe3 taamen taase3 3aasher*, with the predictable feminines. They are commonly put before a noun with no definite article, like superlatives:

تامن واحد *taamen waa7ed* ‘the eighth one’

11-19

Like 3-9 11-19 have independent and counting forms, but they are usually followed by singular nouns. In this case the counting forms, counterintuitively, are longer (with the *-ar* suffix):

احد عش احد عشر *é7da3sh é7da3shar*

انتعش انتعشر *étna3sh étna3shar*

تلتعش تلتعشر *tléTTa3sh tléTTa3shar*

اربعتش اربعتشر *arba3Ta3sh arba3Ta3shar*

خمستعش خمستعشر *kham@STa3sh kham@sTa3shar*

ستتعش ستتعشر *séTTa3sh séTTa3shar*

سبعتعش سبعتعشر *sab@3Ta3sh sab@3Ta3shar*

تمنتعش تمتعشر *tménTa3sh tménTa3shar*

تسعتعش تسعتعشر *tés3aTa3sh tés3aTa3shar*

Many Syrian speakers use the first form even in front of nouns:

تمنتعش واحد *tménTa3sh waa7ed* ‘eighteen guys’

The most common way to turn these into ordinals is just to place them after the noun:

الدرس الخمستعش *éddars élkham@sTa3sh* ‘the fifteenth lesson’

20-90

The round numbers are basically as expected. They have only one form each, independently or with nouns. They are followed by the singular, as in fuSHa, and have no distinct ordinals, again as in fuSHa.

عشرين *3éshriin*

ثلاثين *tlaatiin*

اربعين *arba3iin*

خمسين *khamsiin*

ستين *séttiin*

سبعين *sab3iin*

ثمانين *tmaaniin*

تسعين *tés3iin*

The compound forms with units are formed, invariably for gender, as follows:

واحدة وعشرين *wa7daa w3éshriin*

تنتين وعشرين *tneen w3éshriin*

ثلاثة وعشرين *tlaataa w3éshriin*

اربعة وعشرين *arba3aa w3éshriin*

خمسة وعشرين *khamsaa w3éshriin*

ستة وعشرين *sittaa w3éshriin*

سبعة وعشرين *sab3aa w3éshriin*

ثماني وعشرين *tmaani w3éshriin*

تسعة وعشرين *tis3a w3éshriin*

100, 1,000, 1,000,000, 1,000,000,000

The words here are مائة الف مليون مليار *miyye alf milyoon milyaar*. All are followed by singulars:

الف شخص *alf shakh@S* ‘a thousand people’

مليون دولار *milyoon dolaar* ‘a million dollars’

Miyye has a special form, *miit*, used when it is followed by a noun:

ميت واحد *miit waa7ed* ‘a hundred guys’

To say for example ‘150’, ‘50’ is attached to larger numbers with *w-* ‘and’:

مئة وخمسين واحد *miyye w-khamsiin* – 150

مئة وستة وستين *miyye w-sittaa w-sittiin* – 166

All of these numbers have dual forms: ميتين الفين مليونين مليارين *miiteen alfeen milyooneen milyaareen*:

ميتين دولار *miiteen doolar* ‘two hundred dollars’

They can also be counted themselves, as in English:

تلت ميت واحد *tlét miit waa7ed* ‘three hundred people’ (*miyye* does not have a plural)

خمس تالاف سوري *kham@s taalaaf suuri* ‘500 Syrians’

Fractions

Fractions up to ten, like *fuSHa*, are formed on *fé3l* (‘half’ and ‘sixth’ are irregular):

نص تلت ربع خمس سدس سبع ثمن تسع عشر
néSS tél@t réb@3 khém@s séd@s séb@3 tém@n tés@3 3ésh@r

These have plurals formed on *af3aal*:

بانصاص الليل

b2anSaas élleel

In the middle [= the middles] of the night

عم يضربو اخماس باسداس

3am yéD@rbu akhmaas b2asdaas

they’re putting two and two together [multiplying 5ths by 6ths]

تلت ارباعون

tlétt arbaa3on

three quarters of them

(Basic) maths

Addition is expressed either with *w-* ‘and’ or زائد *zaa2ed* ‘plus’ (the verb is جمع *jama3*):

واحد زائد اثنين بساوي ثلاثة *waa7ed zaa2ed @tneen bisaawi tlaate* – $1 + 2 = 3$

واحد وتنين بساوي ثلاثة *waa7ed w@tneen bisaawi tlaate* – $1 + 2 = 3$

Subtraction is expressed with ناقص *naaqeS* (the verb is طرح *Tara7*):

tlaate naaqeS waa7ed – 3 - 2 ثلاثة ناقص واحد

Multiplication is expressed by ضرب *Dar@b* or بـ *b-* (the verb is ضرب *Darab*):

tlaate Darb @tlaate – 3 x 3 ثلاثة ضرب ثلاثة

tlaate b@tlaate – 3 x 3 ثلاثة بتلاثة

Division is expressed by مقسوم على *maqsuum 3ala* or simply على *3ala* (the verb is قسم *qasam*):

tlaate 3ala tlaate – 3/3 ثلاثة على ثلاثة

Expressing possibility, obligation, etc

Possibility

ممکن *mumken/mémken*

This one literally means ‘is possible’ and is usually best translated as ‘can’, ‘could’ or ‘might’ depending on context. As an auxiliary, it is followed by a subjunctive verb:

ممکن تروح معنا اذا بدك
mémken @truu7 ma3na iza béddak
you can go with us if you want

بتعرف انه الواحد احيانا ممكن يطلع خلقه
bta3ref énnu ilwaa7ed a7yaanan mumken yéTla3 khél2o
you know that sometimes, a person can lose their temper... [= that one sometimes their temper can rise]

الله وحدو بيعلم شو ممكن تجيني أحاسيس و مشاعير
aLLa wa7do bya3lem shu mémken tijiini a7aasiis w masha3iir
only God knows what feelings I might have [= what feelings and feelings might come to me]

For the past, we have to use كان as an auxiliary. This gives a counterfactual meaning (could have, but didn’t).

كان ممكن يعمل فتنة بيني وبين امي
kaan mémken ya3mel fitne beeni wbeen émmi
it could’ve caused real trouble between me and my mum

كان ممكن يعمل اي شي بدو ياه
kaan mumken ya3mel eyy shi béddo yaa
he could have done anything he wanted

It can also be used with subjunctive *kaan* plus a past verb:

ممکن يكون راح يحيب بيكيت دخان
mémken ykuun raa7 yjiib baakeet dékhkhaan
he might have gone to get a packet of cigarettes

It can be used in requests as well, like English ‘could’:

لو سمحت ممكن تسكر الشباك؟
law sama7@t mumken tsakker éshshébbak?
excuse me, could you close the window?

In this sense it can appear without a verb:

ممکن قلم؟
mumken 2alam?
could I have a pen?

It appears on its own as well:

أو لا ممکن
wala mumken!
it's just not possible (anymore!)

اي ممکن
ee mumken
yeah, possibly (or yes, I can/could, yes it can/could etc)

كل شي ممکن
kéll shi mémken
anything's possible

إذا ممکن
iza mumken
if that's possible (if you can, etc etc)

يمكن *yémken*

Yémken is a frozen verbal form without a *b-* prefix. It is an adverbial form and often means 'perhaps' or 'possibly'. In this sense it is much freer in terms of where it can go in the sentence than *mémken* is:

...يمكن أكثر من المشاكل التي بتصير بالحياة سببها انو
yémken aktariit élmashaakel élli bétSiir bi-l7ayaat sababa énno...
perhaps the reason for most of the problems that happen in life is...

لحنا تترجمها بدك يمكن تكتب هامش صفحتين شرح لالها حتا يفهمها القارئ
la7atta ttarjémha béddak yémken téktob haamesh Séf@7teen shar@7 la2élha 7atta yéfhamha lqaare2
in order to translate it you'd need to write maybe a two-page long footnote explaining it for the reader to understand...

مو مكتوبة بصيغة صح يمكن
muu maktuube bSiigha Sa77 yémken
it might not be written right

يمكن عمر بن الخطاب كان ناجح نوعا ما
yémken 3omar bin al-khaTTaab kaan naaje7 naw3an ma
I guess/maybe (the TV series) Umar bin al-Khattab was sort of good

You can use it with the past too:

يمكن راح يمكن ما راح
yémken raa7 yémken maa raa7
maybe he went, maybe he didn't

It is also used like *mémken* as an auxiliary with a subjunctive:

يمكن ما يتوفر معي
yémken maa yétwaffar 3éndi
I might not be able to get it (= the money) [= it might not become available with me]

It occasionally acts like a proper verb meaning 'be possible':

اكثر ما يمكن
aktar ma yémken
as much as possible

بصير *biSiir*

This is typically an auxiliary and means approximately 'is it possible/acceptable?' It appears with subjunctive verbs:

ما بصير تحكي هيك قدام الضيوف
maa biSiir té7ki heek 2édzaam léDyuuf
it's not right for you to talk like that in front of the guests!

بصير احكيك اشتقتك ولا الجديدة للي عندك بتغار؟
biSiir é7kiilak @shta2téllak wélla léjdiide lli 3éndak bétghaar?
am I allowed to tell you I miss you or is your new (girlfriend) the jealous type?

بصير احول خطي من اجتماعي لخط زين الجديد؟
biSiir a7awwel khaTTi min ijtimaai la-khaTT zeen lijdiid?
is it possible to change my (phone) contract from 'sociable' to [Zain](#)'s new contract?
['sociable' was the name of one of Zain's phone contracts]

Like *mémken* it can be used with nouns too:

بصير سؤال صغير؟
biSiir su2aal @zghiir?
can I just ask one question? [= a small question]

Generally this form is invariable (and should not be confused with other uses of *Saar* like 'become' and 'happen' which conjugate normally) but some Syrians accept the plural form with nouns like in the following sentence:

التنين بصيرو
létnéen biSiiru
both are possible, both work

بجوز *bijuuz*

بجوز is another frozen verbal form used similar to يمكن, meaning ‘possibly’ or ‘might’:

في منن بجوز اصلن من السويدا
fii ménnon bijuuz aSlon mn éssweeda
there are some of them who might be originally from Sweida [= that their origin might be from Sweida]

بجوز قلون رح يشتكي عليون
bijuuz 2éllon ra7 yéshtéki 3aleyyon
maybe he told them he was going to make a complaint about them

It can appear with normal *b*-presents like this – if the verb refers to something general or actually present (as opposed to future):

بجوز بيرمز لشي او لشخص
bijuuz byérmaz la-shi aw la-shakh@S
it might be a reference to a thing or a person

It can also appear in counterfactuals meaning ‘might have’ or ‘perhaps’ (depending on context):

لو هربو بجوز كانو نفدو
law hérbu bijuuz kaanu nafadu
if they’d run away perhaps they’d have escaped/they might have escaped

Or it can act like *mémken* with future reference:

...كمان في كلمة بجوز تفكرها مشابهة
kamaan fii kélme bijuuz tfakkérha mushaabiha
there’s another word you might think is similar...

بجوز احتاج مساعدتك
bijuuz é7taaj musaa3adtak
I might need your help

بركي, *bérki*, *belki*

This one is a loanword from Turkish *belki*. In Damascus *bérki* (presumably a corruption) is more common but you will hear both. *Belki* is the normal form in Jordan and Palestine, I think. It is used almost exclusively with future reference, most commonly with *b*-present verbs:

بركي جبلك كل يوم بيتزا
bérki jéblek kéll yoom biitza
maybe I’ll bring you pizza every day

بركي منشوفك عن قريب
bérki ménshuufak 3an 2ariib
maybe (hopefully) we’ll see you sometime soon

It is sometimes used with a past tense verb, but this also has future reference and carries a very specific meaning which is something like ‘but what if...’:

بركي انمستكت؟
bérki nmasak@t?
what if you get caught?!

وبركي ما قدرت ترجع؟
w-bérki maa 2dér@t térja3
and what if you can’t come back?!

It is also used to connect two clauses with a sense that is sort of difficult to translate concisely into English. Usually the format is like this: ‘do X, *bérki* you’ll do Y’ and it means something like ‘so that you might’ in archaic English:

احكيلو بركي بزورنا
é7kiilo bérki bizuurna
talk to him and maybe he’ll visit us

This joke illustrates this use well even if it doesn’t say much about marital life:

وحدة قالت لزوجها : حلمت انك علمتني السواقة و جبتي لي سيارة كمان ، قلها زوجها ؛ كملني نومك بركي بتعملي حادث والله بياخذك
wa7de 2aalet la-zoojha: 7alam@t énnak 3allamtni léswaa2a w-jébtélli siyyaara kamaan! 2éllha zoojha kammlí noomek bérki bta3mli 7aades w-aLLa yaakhdik!
a woman said to her husband: ‘I dreamt you’d bought me a car and taught me to drive too!’ Her husband said: ‘go back to sleep and maybe (hopefully) you’ll have an accident!’ [= that you might have an accident, and God take you!]

مستحيل *musta7iil*

‘Impossible’, ‘it’s impossible’. Used with a subjunctive verb:

مستحيل انساكي
musta7iil énsaaki
it would be impossible for me to forget you

The passive

The [passive](#) is often used to express general possibility/ability:

الزلمة ما بينمشي معو
ézzalame maa byénmasha ma3o
you can’t get along with the guy [= he is not walked with]

ما بينهرب من هالسجن
maa byénhareb mén has-séj@n
you can’t escape from this prison

Likelihood

اكيد *akiid*, ع الاكيد *3al2akiid*

Certainly, definitely, surely.

انتى اكيد مالك مقتنعة بيلي عم تقوليه
inti akiid maalek méqtan3a byalli 3am t2uulii
you definitely/surely don't believe what you're saying

بيجي ع الاكيد خلال اسبوع
byiji 3al2akiid khilaal ésbuu3
it'll definitely come within a week

ع الاغلب *3al2aghlab*

Probably, most likely.

ع الاغلب ما في دوام لاول الشهر
3al2aghlab maa fii dawaam la-2awwal éshshah@r
most likely there'll be no work 'til the beginning of next month

بكون *bikuun*

Bikuun [is often used](#) to express judgements about likelihood in a way similar to 'must be'.

بدو يكون *béd-do ykuun*

This construction is used to express judgements about likelihood in a way similar to 'he must be':

هلق بدو يكون مشي
halla2 béd-do ykuun méshi
by now he'll have left

اجباري *ijbaari*

Literally 'compulsory', but used to mean 'certainly', 'definitely'.

Ability

بيقدر *2éder/byé2der* / بقدر

This is the normal equivalent to 'can', but typically expresses ability of a person rather than possibility. It uses subjunctive:

بتقدر تقول مثلا بطلت من الشغل
bté2der @t2uul masalan baTTal@t mn éshshégh@l
you can say for example 'I stopped working...'

It can be used in the past to mean ‘couldn’t’, if it refers to one specific time:

بس والله ما قدرت اعمل شي
bass waLLa maa 2dér@t a3mel shi
but I swear, I couldn’t do anything

It can also be used in participle form (*2édraan*) referring to a specific time-delimited period:

مثل اللي تعبان ومو قدران يمشي
mét@l élli ta3baan w-muu 2édraan yémshi
like someone who’s worn out and can’t walk (normally)

With the preposition *على* it can also be used with nouns and pronouns:

اللي بتقدر عليه
élli bté2der 3alee
what you can do, what you’re capable of

احسن بيحسن *a7san byé7sen*

Sometimes *7asan* instead of *a7san*. In fuSHa this means ‘to do well’ or ‘do properly’ but in Syrian it’s used for simple ‘be able to’ or ‘can’ as a slightly less common synonym of *2éder*:

ما احسنت نام *maa a7san@t naam* – I couldn’t sleep

Its participle is *7asnaan* حسان:

مو حسان نام
muu 7asnaan naam
I can’t sleep

يعرف / عرف *3éref bya3ref*

Literally ‘to know’. Used with a subjunctive verb to indicate ‘know how to’:

انا بعرف سوق
ana ba3ref suu2
I know how to drive

Its semantics however often cover things we use ‘can’ for in English:

ما عم اعرف افتح الباب
maa 3am a3ref éfta7 élbab
I can’t work out how to open the door

لو سمحت وطي صوتك شوي! خاليني اعرف كمل شغلي
law sama7@t waTTi Sootak shweyy, khalliini a3ref kammel shéghli
please lower your voice and let me do my job [= know how to finish my work]

في *fii-*

The pronominal forms of the preposition *b-* or a slightly different variation with an *n* added (*fiini*, *fiik/fiinak*, *fiiki/fiinek*, *fii/fiino*, *fiyya/fiina*, *fiina*, *fiikon*, *fiyyon/fiinon*) can be used with a subjunctive verb to express ability:

فينك تقول انو
fiinak @t2uul énnno
you could say that...

ما فيني امشي
maa fiini émsshi
I can't walk

For the past, it requires *kaan*:

ما كان فيني اعمل شي
maa kaan fiini a3mel shi
I wasn't able to do anything

Obligation

لازم *laazem*

'Must', 'have to', 'should'. Used with a subjunctive verb:

لازم تروح
laazem @truu7
you have to go, you should go

With a negative (either *muu* or *maa* works, though *maa* is more common) it usually means 'you shouldn't/mustn't' etc and not 'you don't have to':

ما لازم تروح
maa laazem @truu7
you shouldn't go

It can be used in the past, but then its meaning is almost always counterfactual 'should have (but didn't)'. In order to say 'I had to' or 'I was forced to' you have to make use of other verbs (e.g. *njabar@t*). *Laazem* can either be placed into the past with *كان* or have a past verb used directly after it:

كان لازم تروح
kaan laazem @truu7
you should have gone

لازم رح
laazem ré7@t
you should have gone

لازم can also be used as a normal adjective meaning 'necessary':

هي الورقة مو لازمة
hayy élwara2a muu laazme
this one's not necessary

In this sense it can take a direct pronominal object:

المصاري لازميني
élmaSaari laazmiinni
I need the money [note *maSaari* is plural]

Often *laazem* + object suffix is used almost like a verb meaning 'to need' which then takes direct objects normally and uses *yaa-* with pronoun objects:

لازميني ياهون
laazémni yaahon
I need it (the money) [= I need them]

ضروري *Daruuri*

Usually 'urgent' or 'absolutely necessary', used with a subjunctive verb:

ضروري تزوج هييك دغري؟
Daruuri TDuuj heek déghri?
do you have to get upset like that straight away??

اضطر مضطر *DTarr méDTarr*

Generally stronger than *laazem* and can be used to express obligation in the past (unlike *laazem*, which if used in the past gives a counterfactual reading). Often appears with *انو*:

اضطريت اني اشترى واحد جديد
DTarreet énni éshtéri waa7ed @jdiid
I had to buy a new one

It can take a noun object with *على*:

ماني مضطر عليهم
maani méDTarr 3aleyyon
I don't need them urgently

انجبر مجبور *majbuur njabar*

'Obligated', 'forced'. *Majbuur* is the participle, *انجبر* is the verb.

مجبور سافر
majbuur saafir
I have to/I'm obliged to go abroad

كانت الطريق مسدودة فأنجبرت ارجع
kaant éTTarii2a masduude fa-njabar@t érja3
the road was blocked so I had to come back

Simple prepositions

b- or bé-

b- perhaps most commonly expresses static location and lines up with English ‘in’, ‘at’ or *fuSHa* في.

بالبیت *bi-lbeet* – at home

بالسيارة *bi-ssiyyaara* – in the car

It is also used to express the instrument or means by which something is done (one of the uses of English ‘with’):

عملتو بايدي *3méltu b-2iidi* – I made it myself [= with my hand]

بسرة *b-sér3a* – quickly [= with speed]

It is also commonly used with the meaning ‘about’:

اليوم ما بقدر احكي فيه
élyoom maa bé2der é7ki fii
I can’t talk about today

It is also idiomatically used in names of food, etc to mean ‘with’:

رز بعدس *rézz b-3adas* – rice and lentils (i.e. Jordanian-style [mjaddara](#))

It is also used idiomatically replacing normal direct objects in a way that adds a nuance of long, continuous action (like the colloquial English use of ‘on’):

عم يضرب فيني
3am yéDrob fiini
he’s beating on me

As with other prepositions it is also used commonly with verbs in senses that seem relatively unconnected to its independent use:

انتطلع بـ *TTalla3 b-* ‘look at’

التقى بـ *Ita2a b-* ‘meet with’

Most speakers do not have *في* as an independent preposition, but when pronoun suffixes are added to *b-* it becomes *فيـ*. In Syrian the pronoun forms are *فيونا فيكون فيون* *fiini fiik fiiki fii fiyya fiina fiikon fiyyon* (occasionally *fiiha, fiihon*) – *فيـ* is irregular. The regular form *fiyyi* is found in other dialects. In Pal/Jor *fiyyo* (for *fii*), *fiikom* and *fiihom* are used.

In Syrian and Lebanese, *fii-* is also very commonly used as a pseudoverb with subjunctive constructions, expressing ability:

ما فيني احكي هلق
maa fiini é7ki halla2
I can't talk now [in Lebanese, *maa fiyye/fiyyi...*]

مع *ma3*

مع as a preposition almost always means 'with':

مع اختي *ma3 ékhti* – with my sister

There are occasions when it is idiomatically translated using another preposition in English, but its basic meaning is the same:

ما عم ينفتح معي
maa 3am yénfate7 ma3i
I can't get it to open [= it's not opening with me]

شو صار معك
shu Saar ma3ak
what happened to you [= what's happened with you?]

كيفني معك؟
kiifni ma3ak?
what do you think of me? [= how am I with you?]

It is also used as a pseudoverb meaning 'to have on you', 'to have with you':

اي معي المصاري
ee ma3i lmaSaari
I've got the money with me, yeah

In Jor/Pal, some speakers use the Egyptian-style form *ma3aa-* with suffix (معاي *ma3aay*) rather than the expected form *ma3-* (*ma3i*).

عند *3énd*

3énd (or sometimes in Syr/Leb *3and*) expresses location near something or in the vicinity of something:

عند المدخل
3énd élmadkhal
by the entrance

انا عند الكازية
ana 3énd élkaaziyye
I'm by the petrol station

It is commonly used in ways which are tricky to translate into English directly but preserve this meaning intuitively (often it can be translated with French *chez*):

كنت عند خالد
ként 3énd khaaled
I was at Khaled's

المشكلة عندك
élmésh@kle 3éndak
the problem's at your end

وقف عندك
wa22ef 3éndak
stop where you are

It is frequently used as a pseudoverb meaning 'have', as in fuSHa:

عندي تلت اخوات
3éndi tlett ékhwaat
I have three brothers

Its pronoun forms are regular, except the 1pl form: *3énna* 'we have'/'by us'.

3an عن

3an commonly expresses distance or movement away from something:

قديش بتبعد عن البيت؟
2addeesh btéb3od 3an élbeet?
how far away is it from the house?

إذا انفصل راسو عن جسمو نهائيا
iza nfaSal raaso 3an jésmo nihaa2iyyan...
if his head was totally separated from his body...

It also commonly means 'about':

اللي قلناك عنو
éli 2éltéllak 3anno
the one I told you about

It means 'for' in the sense of 'instead of', as in these examples:

شيل عنك؟
shiil 3annak?
should I carry [it] for you [= instead of you]?

بدفع عنك
bédfa3 3annak
I'll pay for you

It also expresses, occasionally, duration (e.g. of a contract):

العقد عن سنة
él3aq@d 3an séne
the contract is for a year

With pronouns it acquires an extra n: *3anno* ‘about him’, for example.

من *mén*

Mén (sometimes reduced to *mn* before vowels) is most commonly translatable as ‘from’, expressing movement away from something:

جاية من بيروت
jaaye mén beeruut
I’m coming from Beirut

انا من بريطانيا
ana mén briTaanya
I’m from Britain

In this sense, it can be combined with other prepositions:

هات من عندك
haat mén 3éndak
give me some of yours [= from by you]

من ع النيت
mén 3a-nneet
off the internet

It also frequently means ‘by way of’ or ‘via’ or ‘through’:

من هون؟
mén hoon?
is it this way? (this is the root of the common arabophone English mistake ‘from here?’)

فات من الباب الثاني
faat mn élbaab éttaani
he came in through the other door

القطار بيمرق من هون
élqiTaar byémro2 mén hoon
the train comes through here

من تحت الجسر
mén ta7t éjjés@r
(go) underneath the bridge

It also very commonly expresses cause:

من غير شي متدايق
mén gheer shi métdaaye2
I'm annoyed because of something else

As a time expression, it means 'since' or 'ago' (equivalent to fuSHa *mundhu*):

من تلت سنين
mén tlétt @sniin
three years ago

Like عن it gains an extra n when pronouns are attached: منو *ménno* 'from him'.

la-

la- generally lines up with fuSHa *li-*. It typically means 'for':

هدية لمرتي
hdiyye la-marti
a present for my wife

It is also used, as in fuSHa, to express belonging outside the *iDaafe* construction:

لمين الشنطة؟
la-miin éshshanTa?
whose is the bag?

غنية لفيروز
ghanniyye la-feeruuz
a song by Feyrouz, a song of Feyrouz's (thus the common Arabophone mistake 'a song for Feyrouz', which means something else in English)

In some other limited contexts (mainly with function words) it expresses motion to or reason:

لوين؟
laween?
where to?

ل عندك
la3éndak
to your house

لهيك
laheek
because of that, as a result

It also means 'until':

لهلق سهرانين؟
lahalla2 sahraaniin?
you're still up? [= until now staying up?]

سهرانين للصبح
sahraaniin la-SSéb@7
we're staying up until morning!

It is also commonly associated with verbs:

داقْ da22 la- 'ring up, phone'

حكي 7aka la- 'speak to'

In particular, many loaned verbs take *la-*:

تلفن talfan la- 'telephone'

فرمت farmat la- 'format' (a computer)

It is also often combined with a normal object or possessive pronoun and a following noun for emphasis or, sometimes, for unclear reasons:

رفيقو لابي rfii2o la-2abuuy – my father's friend

سألو s2alo la-2élo – ask him [not me]

la- has two sets of pronominal forms, one independent and one which commonly attaches to verbs (and occasionally other parts of speech). We have discussed the attaching set already in the object pronoun section. The independent set are formed by attaching pronouns not to *la-* but to *él-*: الو *élak élo* etc. These sometimes come with an additional *la-* prefixed to them: *la2élak*:

الشنطة لإلك ésh-shanTa la-2élak? – is the bag yours?

These independent forms are sometimes used as a pseudoverb expressing possession, as in fuSHa:

إلك أخوات? *élak ékhwaat?* – do you have any brothers and sisters?

ك ka-

Ka- is comparatively rarely used in colloquial. It is usually used in the sense of 'as' you see in the following sentence:

ما بقدر انكر اصلي كعربي
maa béd2der énkor 2aSli ka-3arabi
I can't deny my origins as an Arab (or 'as an Arab, I can't...' depending on pause)

In a related usage you may occasionally hear it in a difficult-to-translate sense meaning something like English -wise:

هلق انا كوضعي المالي تمام
halla2 2ana ka-waD3i lmaali tamaam
now I'm, money-wise, fine

3ala على

This is by far the most complicated and multi-meaning preposition in both colloquial and probably fuSHa as well. It has two forms: على and simple 3a-. The contracted form is always used before the definite article (3a-lbeet) and optionally used elsewhere too (3a raasi 'on my head').

It often means 'on' or 'onto', as in fuSHa:

3all2o 3al7eeT علقو ع الحيط – hang it on the wall

3a-ttakh@t ع التخت – on the bed

It also often translates English 'at' in the sense of alongside, by:

3a-shshébbak ع الشباك – at the window

3a-shshaara ع الشارة – at the (traffic) lights

It has a similar translation ('at') with a few other verbs:

2awwaS 3aleyyi قوص علي – he shot at me

TTalla3 3ala تطلع ب – look at (or بطلع ع)

In colloquial it is also the most common way of expressing movement towards or into something, replacing إلى in fuSHa (which does not exist):

رايحين ع الجامعة
raay7iin 3a-jjaam3a
we're going to university

فات ع الغرفة
faat 3a-lghérfe
he came into the room

In this meaning, it can appear alongside other expressions of location, particularly لعندو:

رحت لعندو ع البيت
ré7@t la3éndo 3a-lbeet
I went [to see him] at his house

It can also express metaphorical movement:

انا بدي قدم على هلمنصب

2ana béddi 2addem 3ala hal-manSeb

I want to apply for this job [= go forward, put forward for]

It is translated by ‘for/to’ in expressions like the following:

عزیز علي *3aziiz 3aleyyi* – dear to me

صغير عليك *zghiir 3aleek* – it’s (too) small for you

It often means something along the lines of ‘according to’:

ع الدور *3a-ddoor* – take it in turns/you have to wait your turn [= (it works) according to (a system of) turns]

ماشي ع النظام *maashi 3a-nniZaam* – operating according to a system, in an orderly fashion

على كيفك *3ala keefak~kiifak* – up to you, right up your street [= according to your mood]

على زوقك *3ala zoo2ak* – what you think is best, ‘surprise me’ [= according to your taste]

It can express a meaning of being in a particular state, as in the following expression:

قديش صارلو على هالحالة؟

2addeesh Sallo 3ala hal7aale?

how long’s he been in this state?

It is used in a large number of adverbial and adjectival expressions in a related sense:

على انفراد *3ala infiraad* – in private

على رواق *3ala rawaa2* – in peace and quiet

على مهلو *3ala mahlo* – slowly, taking his time (with pronoun agreement)

ع القديم *3a-l2adiim* – old-fashioned

ع السريع *3a-ssarii3* – quickly

ع البطيء *3a-lbaTii2* – slowly

ع المظبوط *3a-lmaZbuuT* – precisely

ع المضمون *3a-lmaDmuun* – guaranteed

ع الاغلب *3a-l2aghlab* – most likely

3a-lmaashi – in passing ع الماشي

3ala maraa2i – to my taste, to my liking, my type على مراقي

3ala lébnaani – Lebanese style على لبناني

It also often expresses that its object is negatively affected by a verb, as in the following expressions:

تجوز علي

tjawwaz 3aleyyi

he married [a second wife, to my detriment] (this expression literally means ‘he married a second wife whilst I was still married to him’ and is difficult to translate pithily into English for obvious reasons)

طلّع علي إشاعات

Talla3 3aleyyi 2ishaa3aat

he started rumours about me

عم اطفى الشوفاج ع الاولاد بالليل

3am éTfi shshoofaaj 3a-l@wlaad billeel

I’ve been turning the heating off on the kids at night [i.e. to the kids’ detriment]

دقيت عليه الباب

da22eet 3alee lbaab

I knocked on the door [of the room he was in]

راح عليك الباص

raa7 3aleek élbaaS

you missed the bus [the bus went, to your detriment]

As in the second example, it can mean ‘about’, often in a negative context: *حكى* and *حكى على* are supposedly distinct, with the first meaning ‘talk negatively about’ and the second a more neutral ‘talk about’. In reality it seems that *على* is increasingly becoming a neutral ‘about’ in some expressions:

اللي قلناك عليه

éli 2éltéllak 3alee

what I told you about

It can express ‘in spite of’:

انت معك حق على حيونتك

inte ma3ak 7a22 3ala 7eewantak

even though you’re a moron, you’re right

انت ولد ازعر وصرصري بس بحبك على عيبك

inte walad az3ar w SarSari bass @b7ébbak 3ala 3eebak

you’re a petty thug, but I like you in spite of your flaws

Finally, it can express (like English ‘on’) that someone will pay for something or is responsible for something:

العرس علي
él3ar@s 3aleyyi
the (cost of) the wedding’s on me!

على حساب مين؟
3ala 7saab miin?
who’s paying? [= on whose account?]

خلي الباقي علي
khalli lbaa2i 3aleyyi
leave the rest to me [= on me]

In a related sense, it can be used as a pseudoverb with a subjunctive verb following it in the meaning ‘must’ (also found in fuSHa):

عليكون تدفعو
3aleekon tédfa3u
you must pay

The pronominal forms are attached to the root *3alee-*: علي *3aleyyi* etc.

Complex prepositions

قدام 2éddaam

Literally ‘in front of’:

قدام البيت 2éddaam élbeet – in front of the house

لا تقضحونا قدام الاجانب

laa téfDa7uuna 2éddaam él2ajaaneb

don't make us look bad in front of the foreigners!

Can be used with *la-* indicating motion:

لقدام شوي

la2éddaam shwayy

a bit further on (keep going)

Can be used independently meaning approximately ‘in front’:

انا قاعد قدام وهي قاعده ورا

ana 2aa3ed 2éddaam w-hiyye 2aa3de wara

I'm sitting in the front and she's sitting in the back [of a car]

قد 2add

2add essentially means ‘the size of’ or ‘the extent of’, and has a number of idiomatic uses:

مين بحبك قدي؟

miin bi7ébbak 2addi?

who loves you as much as me?

ما في كرسي قدي

maa fii kérsi 2addi

there's no chair big enough for me

انت قدها؟

énte 2addha?

are you up to the task?

انا قد كلامي

ana 2add kalaami

I keep my word

بحبك قد الدنيا

b7ébbak 2add éddinye

I love you to the moon and back [= as much as the world]

قد على or قد ع has its own idiomatic uses:

الكراسي على قدنا؟
élkaraasi 3ala 2addna
there are enough chairs for us [the chairs are on our number]

احلامنا على قدنا
a7laamna 3ala 2addna
our dreams are appropriate to our standing

بيت صغير على قدي وقديك
beet @zghiir 3ala 2addi w-2addek
a little house just right for me and you

2ab@l 'before'

2abl él7arb – before the war

Can be used independently in the meaning ‘the time before’:

كل هادا كان قبل
kéll haada kaan 2ab@l
all that was before

With constructions like ‘two days before the war’, there are two possible structures:

قبل الحرب بسنتين
2abl él7arb bsénten
Two years before the war

قبل سنتين من الحرب
2ab@l sénten mn él7arb
Two years before the war

barra

barra lbeet – outside the house

barra has an iDaafe form, *barraat*, which is used with pronouns and optionally with nouns:

barraat élbeet – not at home [= outside the house]

It can be used with *la-* indicating motion:

إطاع لبرا
Tlaa3 la-barra!
get out!

It can be used independently meaning ‘outside’:

القعدة احلى برا
él2a3de 2a7la barra
the atmosphere's nicer outside [= the sitting]

b2alb 'inside'

Generally used for confined spaces:

بقلب الظرف *b2alb éZZar@f* – in the envelope

Literally 'in the heart of', and sometimes can translate that way in English too:

نحننا بقلب السفارة هلق
né7na b2alb éssafaara halla2
we're in the heart of the embassy now! (or perhaps, 'we're well inside the embassy!')

ba3@d 'after'

بعد الحادث *ba3d él7aades* – after the accident

With constructions like 'two days after the accident', there are two possible constructions:

بعد الحادث بيومين
ba3d él7aades byoomeen
Two days after the accident

بعد يومين من الحادث
ba3d yoomeen mn él7aades

been 'among, between'

بين البيوت *been lébyuut* – among the houses, between the houses

When pronouns are added, *been* usually takes the form *beenaat*:

والله يا معلم انا بيناتون
waLLa yaa m3allem 2ana beenaaton
and I swear, boss, I'm one of them! [= among them]

bnéSS 'in the middle of'

Perhaps not really worth analysing as a preposition per se since *néSS* in itself means 'middle' (ركز بالنص *rakkez bé-nnéSS* 'concentrate on the middle') but worth considering for completeness' sake:

بنص الطريق *bnéSS éTTarii2* – in the middle of the road

Has an independent form بالنص *bé-nnéSS* 'in the middle':

انا بالنص *ana bé-nnéSS* – I’m [the one] in the middle (of the picture)

داير *daayer*

Used in the sense of ‘around the border of’ and also ‘around’ a defined mass (a pole, tree etc):

بنو حيط داير لجنيينة
banu 7eeT daayer léjneene
they built a wall around the garden

ربطو داير حوالي الشجرة
rabaTu 7ab@l daayer shshajara
they tied a rope around the tree

رح تشوف اضاءة مشعشة ع داير مندارك ليل نهار
ra7 @tshuuf 2iDaa2a msha3@sh3a 3a-daayer méndaarak leel @nhaar
you’ll see shining lights all around you day and night

These two forms of ‘around’ are used markedly less than their English equivalent however since the sense is often included in the meaning of specific verbs:

لف الدوار
léff édduwaar
go around the roundabout

لفو الحبل على رقبتو
laffu l7abel 3ala ra2ebto
they put the rope around his neck

ضد *Dédd* ‘against’

انا اكيد ضد هالفكرة
ana akiid Dédd hal-fukra
of course, I’m against this idea

فوق *foo2* ‘above’

Usually means above, but can also mean ‘up in’ or ‘on top of’:

اللي ساكن فوقنا
élli saaken foo2na
the guy living above us

الطناجر معلقة فوق الشجرة
éTTanaajer m3alla2a foo2 éshshajara
the pots are hanging up in the tree

لا تستحي حط المعلقة فوق السكر
laa tésté7i 7étt élma3la2a foo2 éssékkar
don't worry, leave the spoon in the sugar [after using it to put sugar in your tea]

Can be used with *la-* to indicate motion:

طلع لفوق
Talle3 la-foo2
look up

Can be used independently, usually meaning 'upstairs' (or 'further up', 'above' etc depending on context):

الاستاذ فوق
él2éstaaz foo2
the gentleman is upstairs

جنب *janb, jamb* 'next to'

تعال عود جنبي
ta3aal 3ood jambi
come and sit next to me

جوا *juwwa* 'inside'

جوا البيت *juwwa lbeet* – inside the house

juwwa has an iDaafe form, *juwwaat*, which is used with pronouns and optionally with nouns:

جوات البلد *juwwaat élbald* – inside the country

جواتو *juwwaato* – inside it

Can be used with *la-* indicating motion:

فوت لجوا
fuut la-juwwa
go inwards, further in

Can be used independently meaning 'inside':

مرتبي جوا
marti juwwa
my wife's inside

مواجهه, مواجهه mwaajeh, mwaajiih ‘opposite’

These are synonymous variants and mean ‘opposite’:

ساكن مواجهه بيتون بنفس الحارة
saaken mwaajiih beeton bnafs él7aara
he lived opposite their house in the same neighbourhood

قفا 2afa

2afa is literally the back side of something (e.g. a card, a book...) and can appear in the meaning ‘behind’ or ‘after’:¹³

بشرب حبتين قفا بعضون
béshrab 7abbteen 2afa ba3Don
I drink two pills one after the other

تحت ta7@t

Usually means ‘below’ or ‘underneath’:

تحت الطاولة ta7t éTTaawle – under the table

Can be used with *la-* to indicate motion:

نزىل لتحت *nzeel la-ta7@t* – go downstairs

Can be used independently, usually meaning ‘downstairs’ (but also ‘further down’ etc depending on context):

انا تحت *ana ta7@t* – I’m downstairs

طول Tool

Clearly derived from ‘length’, this is used for both physical description in the meaning of ‘along the length of, all along’ and time in the meaning of ‘throughout, all... long’.

وصلوا يلحقوني طول الليل
w-Dallu yél7a2uuni Tool élleel
they kept chasing me all night long

It often appears with *3ala*:

قاعد يفلح فينا على طول الجمعة
2aa3ed yéfla7 fiina 3ala Tool éjjém3a
they sit there going on at us, all week long [= sitting ploughing in us]

¹³ There’s also the more swearier بطيز *bTiiz* ‘in the arse of’ used in a similar meaning.

مش بس هاي الرسمة. في غيرها على طول الشارع
mish bass haay irrasme. fii gheerha 3ala Tool ishshaare3
not just this painting, there are others all along the street

With على as you are probably aware it has an adverbial meaning ‘straight on’:

روح على طول *ruu7 3ala Tool* – go straight on

وسط *wasT* بوسط *bwasT* ‘in the middle of’

بوسط البلد *bwasT élbald* – downtown [= in the city centre]

وسط هالتخاذل كلو *wasT ha-ttakhaazul kéllo* – in the midst of all this disappointment

ورا *wara*

Literally ‘behind’ or ‘beyond’:

ورا البيت *wara lbeet* – behind, beyond the house

Can be used with *la-* to indicate motion:

رجاع لورا *rjaa3 la-wara* – go backwards, back

Can be used independently with the approximate meaning ‘behind’:

انا قاعد قدام وهي قاعده ورا
ana 2aa3ed 2édzaam w-hiyye 2aa3de wara
I’m sitting in the front and she’s sitting in the back [of a car]

حوالي *7awaali, 7awaalee*- ‘around’

Used in all the senses of English ‘around’ and the fuSHa sense of ‘approximately [a number]’:

صرت شوف كل يلي حوالي بوضوح وعلى حقيقتهم
Sér@t shuuf kéll yalli 7awaaleyyi b-wuDuu7 w-3ala 7aqiiqathum
I started to see all those around me clearly and as they were [= on their truth]

بنو حيط حوالي لجنية
banu 7eeT 7awaali léjneene
they built a wall around the garden

ربطو حبل حوالي الشجرة
rabaTu 7ab@l 7awaali shshajara
they tied a rope around the tree

The fuSHa form حول *7awl* is occasionally used in the sense of ‘on the subject of’ (e.g. *ктаاب 7awl élmawDuu3*).

Conjunctions

أصبح *aSba7*

Syrian. Means ‘in that case’, ‘then’ (and NOT ‘became’ as in fuSHa):

أصبح بكرًا بشوفك
aSba7 bukra bshuufak
then I’ll see you tomorrow

او *aw*

‘Or’, as in fuSHa. However in colloquial *aw* almost never coordinates nouns, only sentences:

او فينك تحكي معها انت اذا بدك
aw fiinak té7ki ma3ha inte éza béddak
or you can talk to her yourself if you want

بقي *ba2a*

Syr/Leb. Generally means ‘then, in that case’:

بقي شو بدنا نعمل؟
ba2a shu béddna na3mel
so, what are we going to do?

It can also be attached after imperatives and similar expressions. In this context it has no direct English translation but adds force to the imperative (maybe it’s equivalent to American ‘already’?):

لك خلصني بقي
lak khalleSni ba2a
stop it already! [= save me already]

بعدين *ba3deen*

Literally ‘afterwards’ or ‘later’ and often used in this meaning:

بعدين بتعرف
ba3deen @bta3ref
I’ll tell you know [= you’ll find out later]

طب ممكن تطلع من قبرك تاخدني بحضنك وترجع بعدين؟
Tabb mémken téTla3 mén 2abrak taakhédni b-7aDnak w-térja3 ba3deen?
OK, can you please come back from the grave and just hug me and go back later?

Also commonly expresses ‘then’, ‘in that case’, and ‘anyway’:

بعدين انا شو ذنبي؟

ba3deen 2ana shu zanbi?

in any case, what have I done? [= what's my sin?]

وبعدين؟

w-ba3deen?

yeah, and what then? / so what?

بس *bass*

The normal word for 'but' or 'just', much more common than classicising لكن:

بس ما بحبو

bass maa b7ébbu!

but I don't love him!

هدول بس

hadool bass

just these

It also commonly mean 'as soon as', 'when'. In this case it is usually followed by a subjunctive or a past:

امي بس تمرض ما بتركها

émmi bass témroD ma bétrékha

when my mother gets ill I don't abandon her

بس بدك تيجي لعندي اتصل فيني

bass béddak tiiji la-3éndi ttaSel fiini

when you want to come here tell me

بس فضيت خبرني

bass @fDiit khabbérni

as soon as you're free [= get free] tell me

فا- *fa-*

Used commonly for 'so'. Can trail off at the end like English 'so...':

بعدين ما شفتو، فـ

ba3deen maa shéfto, faaaaaa ~

anyway, I didn't see him, so...

كانو *ka2énno*

Means 'as if':

كاينو مبارح تركنا
ka2énno mbaare7 tarakna
[it's] as if we broke up yesterday

Like *la2énno* it can be shifted to the end of the sentence:

ما حنشوفو اليوم كائو
maa 7a-nshuufo élyoom ka2énno
seems like we're not going to see him today

It can be used on its own or with a sentence to mean something like 'looks like...', 'looks that way'.

اي كائو
ee ka2énno
yeah, it looks that way

لا-, la7atta

Both of these mean 'until' and 'in order to'. The latter is distinctively Syrian:

نستنى لييجي
néstanna la-yéji
let's wait 'til he comes back

نكشت البيت لحتى جبتها
nakasht élbeet la7atta jébtá!
I had to turn the house upside down to get it [= I rifled through the house until I got it]

It can be combined with *leesh* to mean 'why would', 'why should':

ليش لحتى لحكي معو؟
leesh la7atta é7ki ma3o?
why should I speak to him?

It is used in the following two constructions with expressions of time:

للاسبوع الجاية لشوفو
la-l2ésbuu3 éjjaaye la-shuufu
I won't see him until next week [= until next week for me to see him]

بالصدفة لشوفو
béSSédfe la-shuufu
I only see him rarely [= by chance for me to see him]

La- is also sometimes affixed to first person subjunctives meaning 'let's' or 'let me':

لشوف واحد تاني
lashuuf waa7ed taani
let's speak to [= see] someone else

It also often appears in oaths after والله *waLLa* 'I swear to God':

والله لا كسر لك رجلينك
waLLa la-2éskérlak réjleek
I swear to God, I'll break your legs

لا لا *laa... laa*

The structure *laa... laa* or لا ولا *laa.. wala* means 'neither... nor':

لا شاي ولا قهوة
laa shaay wala 2ahwe
neither tea nor coffee

لا رحت ولا حروح
laa ré7@t wala 7a-ruu7
I didn't go, nor will I

لأنو *la2énn(o)*

The equivalent to fuSHa *li2anna* and the normal word for 'because' in Syrian. Unlike in fuSHa it can be shifted to the end of the sentence as a kind of afterthought:

كل هاد لأنو قللا انو شعرا مو مظبط
kéll haad la2énno 2élla énnno sha3ra muu mZabbaT
all that because he told her her hair didn't look good!

ما رح شوفو اليوم لأنو
maa ra7 shuufu lyoom la2enno
because I'm not going to see him today

مادام *maadaam*

'Since' or 'while'. Takes pronoun suffixes:

ميسوط مدامك معي موجود
mabsuuT maadaamak ma3i mawjuud
I'm happy as long as you're with me

مادامك بالبيت
maadaamak bilbeet
since you're at home

ما عاد *maa3aad*, مابقى *maaba2a*

‘No longer’, ‘not anymore’. Clearly etymologically ‘he did not return’ and ‘he did not remain’. These typically trigger subjunctive. For some people they conjugate, especially with third person feminine, though they are often invariable:

ماعاد اعرف شو بدي احكي

maa3aad a3ref shu béddi é7ki

I don’t know what to say anymore/I no longer know what to say

They can also mean ‘never again’, including in negative imperatives:

ما بقى تحكي معي

maaba2a té7ki ma3i

never talk to me again/stop talking to me

معقول ما بقى نرجع؟

ma32uul maaba2a nérja3?

can it be we’ll never go back? [= is it reasonable we’ll no longer return?]

مشان منشان *méshaan ménshaan 3ashaan* عشان

Méshaan, ménshaan, 3ashaan all mean ‘in order to’:

منشان تروح معو

ménshaan @truu7 ma3o

so you (can) go with him

They are also prepositions which can be used with nouns to mean ‘because of’ or ‘for the benefit of’:

منشان هيك *méshaan heek* – for that reason

منشان الله *ménshaan aLLah* – for God’s sake

In Jor/Pal (like Egyptian) these words can be used in the sense of ‘because’ (i.e. equivalent to (لأنو)). This is not found in Syria.

كرمال *kurmaal/kérmaal*

Probably originally derived from the fuSHa *kurma(tan) la-* ‘in X’s honour’ this is a less common alternative to *ménshaan* meaning ‘in order to’, ‘for the sake of’, ‘because of’ etc. Like *ménshaan* it is mainly a preposition but is worth mentioning here because like *ménshaan* it can be used with subjunctive verbs to mean ‘in order to’.

شي, شي *shi... shi*

This means approximately ‘sometimes like... and sometimes...’ or ‘some... and some...’ Effectively it expresses two exclusive, alternative, but related situations:

عندون اعلى مؤهلات, شي عندو شهادة, شي عندو دكتوراه

3éndon a3la mu2ahhilaat, shi 3éndo shahaade, shi 3éndo doktuuraa

they had the highest qualifications – some of them have degrees, some of them doctorates...

هلق كتير مهم وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لانو كل واحد صار بمكان شي بالشام شي بحلب

halla2 ktiir mohumm wasaa2el éttawaaSul él2ijtimaa3i la2énno kéll waa7ed Saar b-makaan, shi b-éshshaam, shi b-7alab...

nowadays social media is very important because everybody's in a different place, some in Damascus, some in Aleppo...

ماني عايش هون طول حياتي, انا شي باسطنبول, شي بالشام

maani 3aayesh hoon Tool 7ayaati. ana shi b-isTanbuul shi bi-shshaam

I haven't lived here all my life – sometimes in Istanbul, sometimes in Damascus

و w-

Used as 'and' to coordinate sentences, nouns etc:

خبز وملح

khébz w-mél@7

bread and salt

As in fuSHa, it can be used to form *7aal* sentences with present tense sentences, including verbs and participles. In this case it must be followed by a noun:

بغني وانا سايق

bghanni w-2ana saaye2

I sing when I'm driving

وهو ماشي سمع صوت

w-huwwe maashi séme3 Soot

as he was walking along he heard a sound

Occasionally in Syrian/Lebanese w- can precede the predicate:

انا وصغير كنت اقرى كتير

ana w-@zghiir ként é2ra ktiir

when I was young I used to read a lot

It can also be used with all tenses in a very specific meaning of 'when', 'given that', when the first clause is a rhetorical question:

كيف بدى ادفع عنك وراتبي خلص من يومين؟

kiif béddi édfa3 3annak w-raatbi khéleS mén yoomeen?

how am I supposed to pay for you when I used up my salary [= my salary finished] two days ago?

ولا wala

A difficult one to translate directly into English. We could awkwardly sum its meaning up as ‘as long as X doesn’t’. It is followed by a subjunctive, and often occurs with *kéll shi* ‘anything’:

زقوني ولا تنسوني

zé22uuni wala ténsuuni

Leave me out/exclude me, just don’t forget about me

كل شي ولا هادا

kéll shi wala haada

Anything but that!

كل شي ولا عطلك عن شغلك

kéll shi wala 3aTtlak 3an shéghlak!

[I’d rather do] anything than distract you from your work! [sarcastically]

A different *wala* appears in double negatives:

ما شفت ولا شي

maa shéf@t wala shi

I didn’t see anything

ولا *wélla, willa*

‘Or’. Used to offer two contradictory options:

بدك شاي ولا قهوة؟

béddak shaay wélla 2ahwe?

do you want tea or coffee?

Also used to mean ‘or else’, sometimes triggering the past:

سكوت ولا بضربك

skoot wélla beD@rbak

shut up or [else] I’ll hit you

يا *yaa*, يا *ya2éma*

Yaa/ya2éma means ‘or’, and offers two contradictory options. It is most commonly used in the structure يا... *yaa*... *yaa* ‘either... or’:

يا بتروح معي, يا بتضل هون

yaa bétruu7 ma3i, yaa bétDéll hoon

either you go with me or you stay here

Forms with -ma

ما *ma*

On its own, *ma* is used to link together two sentences with a kind of causal relationship (this should not be mistaken for the occasional use of *maa*, with a long vowel, in various negative meanings).

ناميين فوق. ما هنن ما نامو من امبارح
naaymiin foo2 – ma hénnen maa naamu mén @mbaare7
they're asleep upstairs. I mean, they haven't slept since yesterday

Here *ma* adds the nuance that the listener and the speaker both understand the obvious intuitive causal connection between what was said before and the sentence prefixed with *ma*. The same applies in the following sentence although here it can be translated with 'but':

مو صاييم؟ ما الدنيا رمضان
muu Saayem? ma ddénnye ramaDaan
you're not fasting? but it's Ramadan!

احسن *a7san ma* 'lest'

Means 'in case' or more precisely 'lest' (but obviously English stylistic concerns prevent us from translating it that way):

ما تضحك على حدا احسن ما تصوير متلو
maa téD7ak 3ala 7ada a7san ma tSiir métlo
don't laugh at/trick anyone lest you become like them

For some Syrian speakers it can also be used in a way synonymous with احسن من اناو 'better than...' with a following sentence.

الا *élla ma* 'certainly', 'it is always the case that'

المجرم الا ما يرجع ع مسرح الجريمة
élmujrem élla ma yérja3 3a masra7 éljariime
the criminal always returns to the scene of the crime

ياما *yaama* 'how much!'

ياما في ناس هيك
yaama fii naas heek
there are so many people like that

Nouns + *ma*

مكان *makaan ma*, محل *ma7all ma*, مطرح *maTra7 ma*, قرنة *2érnet ma* '(in, from etc) the place that'

لحظة *la7Zet ma* 'the moment that'

مجرد *mjarrad ma* 'as soon as', 'the very moment that'

وقت *wa2@t ma* '(at) the time when', 'when'

ساعة *saa2et ma* ‘(at) the time when’, ‘when’

يوم *yoom ma* ‘(on) the day when’, ‘when’

Prepositions + ma

بدال *badaal ma*, عوضا *3awaaD ma* ‘instead of’

بدال ما تعمل مظاهرات وتوقف بالشوارع ... روح وقف ع باب دار النائب الي انتخبته وخليه يمثلك
badaal ma ta3mel muZaaharaat w-@twa22ef bé-shshaare3... ruu7 wa22ef 3a baab
daar énnaa2eb élli ntakhabto w khallii ymasslak
instead of demonstrating and standing around in the street, go and stand at the door of
the MP you elected and make him represent you

بلا *bala ma*, بدون *biduun ma*, من دون *mén duun ma* ‘without’

مسموح يارغل بس بلا ما يطلع دخان بالغرفة
masmuu7 y2argel bass bala ma yéTla3 dékhkhaan bé-lghérfe
he’s allowed to smoke shisha but [only] without smoke filling up the room

واحدة نزلتو بالصفحة من دون ما تتأكد من مصدر الخبر
waa7de nazzaléto béSSéf7a mén duun ma tét2akkad mén maSdar élkhabar
someone uploaded it to the page without making sure of its source

بعد *ba3@d ma* ‘after’

بعد ما تقرأ عن الله
ba3@d ma té2ra 3an aLLah
after you read about God

فوق *foo2 ma* ‘on top of’

فوق ماني كذاب
foo2 maani kazzaab
on top of me being a liar

لبين *labeen ma* ‘until’ or ‘by the time’

لبين ما ييجي نكون خلصنا
labeen ma yiiji ménkuun khallaSna
by the time he gets here we’ll be finished

لما *lamma* ‘when’

لما شفتو استغربت
lamma shéfto staghrab@t
when I saw him I was surprised

لحد *la7add ma* ‘until’

لحد ما تموت من الضحك
la7add ma tmuut mn éDDa7@k
until you die of laughing

مثل ما *mét@l ma* ‘like, as’ (in Jor/Pal ما زي *zayy ma*)

مثل ما بدك
mét@l ma béddak
as you like

مثل مانك عرفان
mét@l maanak 3arfaan
as you know

زي ما قلت
zayy ma 2ult
as I said

طول ما *Tool ma* ‘as long as, while’

طول مانك عم تتنفس عندك فرصة لواقع افضل
Tool maanak 3am tétnaffas 3éndak férSa la-waaqe3 afDal
as long as you’re breathing you have the opportunity for a better reality

قبل ما *2ab@l ma* ‘before’

This is usually followed by a subjunctive, even when the meaning is past:

قبل ما يوصل
2ab@l ma yuuSal
before he arrived/arrives

قد ما *2add ma* ‘however much’, ‘as much as’, ‘as long as’

قد ما احكي عن ريال مدريد ما بوفي حقك
2add ma é7ki 3an reyaal madriid maa bwaffi 7aqqak
however much I talk about RM I won’t be doing you justice

حسب ما *7asab ma* ‘according to how’, ‘depending on’, ‘as’

بس حسب ما شفت
bass 7asab ma shéf@t
but as far as I know [= as I’ve seen]

Question words with -ma

Question forms can be combined with *-ma* to create words meaning ‘ever’. These are typically combined with a past form or a subjunctive. Note that *2addeesh* has no direct *-ma* form – its equivalent is formed from the the preposition *2add*.

ما eemta ma, eemat ma ‘whenever’

كنا ايتمى ما فتحنا الراديو الصبح نلاقيهن حاطين فيروز عكل القنوات
kénna eemta ma fata7na rraadyo éSSéb@7 nlaa2iyyon 7aaTTiin feeruuz 3a-kéll
élqanawaat
whenever we turned on the radio in the morning we’d find they’d put Feyrouz on all
the channels

وين ween ma ‘wherever’

وين ما كنتوا يا سوريين الله يسعد صباحكن
aLLa yis3ed Sabaa7kon ween ma kéntu tkuunu yaa suuriyyiin
God make your morning happy wherever you might be, o Syrians!

ما shu ma ايش eesh ma ‘whatever’

شو ما صار عليكى انا حدك موجود
shu ma Saar 3aleeki 2ana 7addek mawjuud
whatever happens to you, I’ll be there

Superlatives + ma

Af3al superlatives can be combined with *ma* in the meaning of ‘the Xest...’:

احسن ما يمكن
a7san ma yémken
As good as possible

Combinations with énnno

bima 2énno ‘since, given that’

bésabab énnno ‘because’

ma3 énnno ‘although’

la-darjet énnno ‘to the extent that’

Taalama ‘as long as’

Verb tables

Form I

Form I verbs are not associated with any one particular meaning and have a range of possible vowelings. For ‘sound verbs’ (no semivowels in their root) there are several alternative past (*fa3al*, *fé3el*) and present (*yéf3él*, *yéf3ol*, *yéf3al*) vowelings. *Fé3el-yéf3al* and *fa3al-yéf3ol/yéf3el* are the most common combinations, but all combinations occur. All possible present and past vowelings (though not all possible combinations) are shown by these three examples:

كتب <i>katab</i> 'to write'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	كااتب <i>kaateb</i>		مكتوب <i>maktuub</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	كتابة <i>kitaabe</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	كتب كتبي كتبو <i>ktoob ktébi ktébu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éktob béktob</i>	اكتب بكتب	<i>katab@t</i>	كتبت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téktob btéktob</i>	تكتب بتكتب	<i>katab@t</i>	كتبت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>ték@tbi bték@tbi</i>	تكتبي بتكتبي	<i>katabti</i>	كتبتني
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéktob byéktob</i>	يكتب بيكتب	<i>katab</i>	كتب
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téktob btéktob</i>	تكتب بتكتب	<i>katbet</i>	كتبت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néktob mnéktob</i>	نكتب منكتب	<i>katabna</i>	كتبنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>ték@tbu bték@tbu</i>	تكتبو بتكتبو	<i>katabtu</i>	كتبو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yék@tbu byék@tbu</i>	يكتبو بيكتبو	<i>katabu</i>	كتبو

مسك <i>mése</i> ‘to hold, catch’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	ماسك <i>maasek</i>		ممسوك <i>mamsuuk</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	مسك <i>mas@k</i>		مسكة <i>maske</i>	
	Imperative:			
	مسيك مسكي مسكو <i>mseek mséki mséku</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>émsek bémsek</i>	امسك بامسك	<i>msék@t</i>	مسكت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>témsek btémsek</i>	تمسك بتمسك	<i>msék@t</i>	مسكت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tém@ski btém@ski</i>	تمسكي بتمسكي	<i>msékti</i>	مسكتني
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yémsek byémsek</i>	يمسك بيمسك	<i>mése</i>	مسك
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>témsek btémsek</i>	تمسك بتمسك	<i>mésket</i>	مسكت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>némsek mnémsek</i>	نمسك منمسك	<i>msékna</i>	مسكنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tém@sku btém@sku</i>	تمسكو بتمسكو	<i>msékto</i>	مسكتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yém@sku byém@sku</i>	يمسكو بيمسكو	<i>mésku</i>	مسكو

تَعِب <i>té3eb</i> 'get tired'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	تَعِبَان <i>ta3baan</i>		-	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	تَعِب <i>ta3@b</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تَعَاب تَعْبِي تَعْبُو <i>t3aab t3abi t3abu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>ét3ab bét3ab</i>	اتَعِب بَتَعِب	<i>t3éb@t</i>	تَعِبْت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tét3ab btét3ab</i>	تَتَعِب بَتَتَعِب	<i>t3éb@t</i>	تَعِبْت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tét3abi btét3abi</i>	تَتَعْبِي بَتَتَعْبِي	<i>t3ébt</i>	تَعِبْتِي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yét3ab byét3ab</i>	يَتَعِب بِيَتَعِب	<i>t3éb@t</i>	تَعِب
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tét3ab btét3ab</i>	تَتَعِب بَتَتَعِب	<i>té3bet</i>	تَعِبْت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nét3ab mnét3ab</i>	نَتَعِب مَنَتَعِب	<i>t3ébna</i>	تَعِبْنَا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tét3abu btét3abu</i>	تَتَعْبُو بَتَتَعْبُو	<i>t3ébtu</i>	تَعِبْتُو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yét3abu byét3abu</i>	يَتَعْبُو بِيَتَعْبُو	<i>té3bu</i>	تَعِبُو

So-called 'assimilating verbs' (those with a semi-vowel as their initial root consonant) do not necessarily assimilate in colloquial. In fact, generally – other than the assimilation of *-éw-* to *-uu-* – they are effectively regular. These are the forms given in the chart below. Some speakers, however, have a *fuSHa*-icised set of 'assimilated' forms where the *w* is dropped. Note however that some speakers have an alternative set of *fuSHa*-like present forms where the *w* is dropped and the prefixes are *(b)a-Sal*, *(b)té-Sal*, *(b)té-Sali*, and so on. These prefixes occur practically compulsorily with *fuSHa* verbs like *baséq b-* 'I trust'.¹⁴

وصل <i>wéSel</i> 'arrive'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	<i>waaSel waSlaan</i> واصل واصلان		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	<i>wSuul</i> وصول		<i>waSle</i> وصلة	
	Imperative:			
	وصال وصلي وصلو <i>wSaal wSali wSalu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>uuSel buuSel</i>	اوصل بوصل	<i>wSél@t</i>	وصلت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tuuSel btuuSel</i>	توصل بتوصل	<i>wSél@t</i>	وصلت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tuuSli btuuSli</i>	توصلي بتوصلي	<i>wSélti</i>	وصلتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yuuSel byuuSel</i>	يوصل بيوصل	<i>wéSel</i>	وصل
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tuuSel btuuSel</i>	توصل بتوصل	<i>wéSlet</i>	وصلنا
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nuuSel mnuuSel</i>	نوصل منوصل	<i>wSélna</i>	وصلنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tuuSel btuuSli</i>	توصلو بتوصلو	<i>wSéltu</i>	وصلتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yuuSlu byuuSlu</i>	يوصلو بيوصلو	<i>wéSlu</i>	وصلو

¹⁴ Note the *a-* prefix, *fuSHa*-style.

Two verbs with initial *hamze*, اكل *akal* ‘eat’ and اخذ *akhad* ‘take’, have a similar set of forms (the past basically regular, the present replaces -é2- with -aa-).

اخذ <i>akhad</i> 'to take'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	أخذ <i>2aakhed</i>		مأخوذ <i>ma2khuud</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	أخذ <i>2akh@d</i>		أخذه <i>2akhde</i>	
	Imperative:			
	خود خدي خود <i>khood khédi khédu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>aakhod baakhod</i>	أخذ بأخذ	<i>2akhad@t</i>	أخذت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>taakhod btaakhod</i>	تأخذ بتأخذ	<i>2akhad@t</i>	أخذت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>taakhdi btaakhdi</i>	تأخذي بتأخذي	<i>2akhatti</i>	أخذتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yaakhod byaakhod</i>	ياخذ بياخذ	<i>2akhad</i>	أخذ
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>taakhod btaakhod</i>	تأخذ بتأخذ	<i>2akhdet</i>	أخذت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>naakhod mnaakhod</i>	ناخذ مناخذ	<i>2akhadna</i>	أخذنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>taakhdu btaakhdu</i>	تأخذو بتأخذو	<i>2akhattu</i>	أخذتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yaakhdu byaakhdu</i>	ياخذو بياخذو	<i>2akhadu</i>	أخذو

Form I hollow verbs (verbs with a semivowel for their middle root consonant) have almost as many possible forms. As in *fuSHa*, three possible present vowellings exist: *yfiil*, *yfuul*, *yfaal*. In Syr/Leb, where short *u* and *i* merge to *é* in stressed syllables, there is only one possible past vowing: *faal* (*fél@t*). In Jor/Pal, where the merger is not made, two options (*faal-fulet* and *faal-filet*) exist.

جاب <i>jaab</i> 'to bring'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	جايب <i>jaayeb</i>		مجيوب <i>majyuub</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	جيب جيلي جيلو <i>jiiib jiiibi jiiibu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>jiiib bjiib</i>	جيب بجيب	<i>jéb@t</i>	جيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tjiib bétjiib</i>	تجيب بتجيب	<i>jéb@t</i>	جيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tjiibi bétjiibi</i>	تجيبي بتجيبي	<i>jébtí</i>	جيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yjiib bijiib</i>	يجيب بجيب	<i>jaab</i>	جاب
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tjiib bétjiib</i>	تجيب بتجيب	<i>jaabet</i>	جابت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>njiib ménjiib</i>	نجيب منجيب	<i>jébná</i>	جبنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tjiibu bétjiibu</i>	تجييو بتجييو	<i>jébtu</i>	جيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yjiibu bijiibu</i>	يجييو بجييو	<i>jaabu</i>	جابو

داق <i>daa2</i> 'to taste'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	دايق <i>daaye2</i>		مديق <i>madyuu2</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	دوق <i>doo2</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	دوق دوقي دوقو <i>duu2 duu2i duu2u</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>duu2 bduu2</i>	دوق بدوق	<i>dé2@t</i>	دقت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tduu2 bétduu2</i>	تدوق بتدوق	<i>dé2@t</i>	دقت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tduu2i bétduu2i</i>	تدوقي بتدوقي	<i>dé2ti</i>	دقتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yduu2 biduu2</i>	يدوق بدوق	<i>daa2</i>	داق
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tduu2 bétduu2</i>	تدوق بتدوق	<i>daa2et</i>	داقت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nduu2 ménduu2</i>	ندوق مندوق	<i>dé2na</i>	دقنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tduu2u bétduu2u</i>	تدوقو بتدوقو	<i>dé2tu</i>	دقتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yduu2u biduu2u</i>	يدوقو بدوقو	<i>daa2u</i>	داقو

نام <i>naam</i> 'to sleep'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	نايم <i>naayem</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	نوم <i>noom</i>		نومة <i>noome</i>	
	Imperative:			
	نام نامي نامو <i>naam naami naamu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>naam bnaam</i>	نام بنام	<i>ném@t</i>	نمت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tnaam bétnaam</i>	تنام بتنام	<i>ném@t</i>	نمت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tnaami bétnaami</i>	تنامي بتنامي	<i>némti</i>	نمتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>ynaam binaam</i>	ينام بنام	<i>naam</i>	نام
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tnaam bétnaam</i>	تنام بتنام	<i>naamet</i>	نامت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nnaam bénnaam</i>	ننام مننام	<i>némna</i>	نمنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tnaamu bétnaamu</i>	تنامو بتنامو	<i>némtu</i>	نمتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>ynaamu binaamu</i>	ينامو بنامو	<i>naamu</i>	نامو

Weak verbs (those with a final semivowel root consonant) have two possible present vowellings (*yéf3a*, *yéf3i*) and two past vowellings (*fa3a* *fé3i*). By far the most common combinations are *fa3a-yéf3i*, *fé3i-yéf3a*, but there are some common exceptions (*béki-yébkí* ‘cry’, *méshi yémshi* ‘walk’).

نسي <i>nési</i> ‘forget’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	نسيان <i>nésyaan</i>		منسي <i>ménsi</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	نسي <i>nasy</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	انسي انسي انسو <i>énsa énsi énsu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>énsa bénsa</i>	انسي بنسي	<i>nsiit</i>	نسيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>ténsa bténsa</i>	تنسي بتنسي	<i>nsiit</i>	نسيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>ténsi bténsi</i>	تنسي بتنسي	<i>nsiiti</i>	نسيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yénsa byénsa</i>	ينسي بينسي	<i>nési</i>	نسي
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>ténsa bténsa</i>	تنسي بتنسي	<i>nésyet</i>	نسيت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nénsa mnénsa</i>	ننسي مننسي	<i>nsiina</i>	نسينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>ténsu bténsu</i>	تنسو بتنسو	<i>nsiitu</i>	نسيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yénsu byénsu</i>	ينسو بينسو	<i>nésyu</i>	نسبو

طفي <i>Tafa</i> ‘turn off’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	طافي <i>Taafi</i>		مطفي <i>méTfi</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	طفي <i>Tafy</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	اطفي ااطفي اطفو <i>éTfi éTfi éTfu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éTfi béTfi</i>	اطفي بطفي	<i>Tafeet</i>	طفيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téTfi btéTfi</i>	تطفي بتطفي	<i>Tafeet</i>	طفيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téTfi btéTfi</i>	تطفي بتطفي	<i>Tafeeti</i>	طفيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéTfi</i>	يطفي بيطفي	<i>Tafa</i>	طفي
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téTfi btéTfi</i>	تطفي بتطفي	<i>Tafet</i>	طفت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néTfi mnéTfi</i>	نطفي منطفي	<i>Tafeena</i>	طفينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>téTfu btéTfu</i>	تطفو بتطفو	<i>Tafeetu</i>	طفيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéTfu byéTfu</i>	بطفو بيطفو	<i>Tafu</i>	طفو

Doubled verbs (those with identical second and third root consonants) only have one possible set of vowelings, *fa33-yfé33*. In dialects without the merger of *e* and *o* to *é*, there are two possible present vowelings (*yfe33*, *yfo33*). In both cases, doubled verbs are more straightforward than in fuSHa.

دق <i>da22</i> 'hit, tap'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	داقق <i>daa2e2</i> (or <i>daa22</i>)		مدقوق <i>mad2uu2</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	دق <i>da22</i>		دقة <i>da22a</i>	
	Imperative:			
	دق دقي دقو <i>dé22 dé22i dé22u</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>dé22 bdé22</i>	دق بدق	<i>da22eet</i>	دقيقت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tdé22 bétdé22</i>	تدق بتدق	<i>da22eet</i>	دقيقت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tdé22i bétde22i</i>	تدقي بتدقي	<i>da22eeti</i>	دقيقتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>ydé22 bidé22</i>	يدق بدق	<i>da22</i>	دق
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tdé22 bétdé22</i>	تدق بتدق	<i>da22et</i>	دقت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>ndé22 méndé22</i>	ندق مندق	<i>da22eena</i>	دقيننا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tdé22u bétde22u</i>	تدقو بتدقو	<i>da22eetu</i>	دقيقتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>ydé22 ydé22u</i>	يدقو بدقو	<i>da22u</i>	دقو

3aTa 'give' is regular in the past, but has an irregular imperative (*3aTi*). The present is formed with *a* in all of the prefixes, which it shares with *3émel* (*ya3mel*) and *3éref* (*ya3ref*).

3aTa عطى 'give'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	عاطي 3aaTi		معطي mé3Ti	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	عطي 3aTi		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	عطي عطى عطو 3aTi 3aTi 3aTu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	a3Ti ba3Ti	اعطي بعطي	3aTeet	عطيت
Inte	ta3Ti bta3Ti	تعطي بتعطي	3aTeet	عطيت
Inti	ta3Ti bta3Ti	تعطي بتعطي	3aTeeti	عطيتي
Huwwe	ya3Ti bya3Ti	يعطي بيعطي	3aTa	عطى
Hiyye	ta3Ti bta3Ti	تعطي بتعطي	3aTet	عطت
Né7na	na3Ti mna3Ti	نعطي منعطي	3aTeena	عطينا
Intu	ta3Tu bta3Tu	تعطو بتعطو	3aTeetu	عطيتو
Hénnen	ya3Tu bya3Tu	يعطو بيعطو	3aTu	عطو

Éja ‘come’ is very irregular. In the past it has two sets of forms, one with the prefix *é-* one without it. The active participle is *jaaye* (which is used for the masculine and the feminine). There is no actual imperative: forms based on *ta3aal-* or *ta3-* stand in. For some speakers the prefixes have a long vowel (*iiji*, *tiiji*) or, more standardly, are as below:

اجى <i>éja</i> ‘to come’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	جاية <i>jaaye</i> , جايين <i>jaayiin</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		جَيَّة <i>jayye</i>	
	Imperative:			
	تعال تعالي تعالو <i>ta3aal ta3aali ta3aalu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éji béji</i>	ايحي ييجي	<i>jiit éjiit</i>	جيت اجيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téji btéji</i>	تيجي بتيجي	<i>jiit éjiit</i>	جيت اجيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téji btéji</i>	تيجي بتيجي	<i>jiiti éjiiti</i>	جيتي اجيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéji byéji</i>	ييجي ييجي	<i>éja</i>	اجى
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téji btéji</i>	تيجي بتيجي	<i>éjet</i>	اجت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néji mnéji</i>	نيجي منيجي	<i>jiina éjiina</i>	جينا اجينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>téju btéju</i>	تيجو بتيجو	<i>jiitu éjiitu</i>	جيتو اجيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéju béju</i>	ييجو ييجو	<i>éju</i>	اجر

La2a ‘to find’ is slightly irregular – the past is a normal form I *fa3a* verb, the present conjugates like a form 3 *faa3a-yfaa3i*.

لقى <i>la2a</i> ‘to find’					
	Active Participle			Passive Participle	
	ملاقي <i>mlaa2i</i>			N/A	
	MaSdar			Noun of Instance	
	N/A			N/A	
	Imperative:				
	لاقي لاقى لاقو <i>laa2i laa2i laa2u</i>				
	Present			Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>laa2i blaa2i</i>	لاقي بلاقي	<i>la2eet</i>	لقيت	
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tlaa2i bétlaa2i</i>	تلاقي بتلاقي	<i>la2eet</i>	لقيت	
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tlaa2i bétlaa2i</i>	تلاقي بتلاقي	<i>la2eeti</i>	لقيتي	
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>ylaa2i bilaa2i</i>	يلاقي بلاقي	<i>la2a</i>	لقى	
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tlaa2i bétlaa2i</i>	تلاقي بتلاقي	<i>la2et</i>	لقت	
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nlaa2i ménlaa2i</i>	نلاقي منلاقي	<i>la2eena</i>	لقينا	
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tlaa2u bétlaa2u</i>	تلاقو بتلاقو	<i>la2eetu</i>	لقيتو	
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>ylaa2u bilaa2u</i>	يلاقو يلاقو	<i>la2u</i>	لقو	

Form II

There are only two types of form IIs – defective roots and all other types of roots. Form II is one of the most common patterns. Its most common use, of course, is for causatives:

دَرَسَ *darras* ‘teach’, ‘send to/put through school’

خَرَّبَ *kharrab* ‘mess up, break’

فَوَّتَ *fawwat* ‘take in, bring in, put in, make enter’

It is also used to derive verbs from e.g. materials meaning ‘put X on’ or ‘add X to’ or ‘apply X’ (etc):

جَبَّسَ *jabbaS* ‘put plaster on’

مَلَّحَ *malla7* ‘salt’

سَكَّرَ *sakkar* ‘add sugar to’, ‘sweeten’

It is used, with some verbs, to derive verbs meaning ‘consider somebody to be X’:

صَدَّقَ *sadda2* ‘believe’

Quite a few form II verbs are actually verbs of becoming:

شَوَّبَ *shawwab* ‘get hot’

رَشَّحَ *rashsha7* ‘develop a cold’

Some form IIs have multiple meanings depending on context (or alternatively there are multiple homonyms):

سَكَّرَ *sakkar* ‘get/make someone drunk’ (< *séker* ‘get drunk’), ‘add sugar to’ (< *sékkaar* ‘sugar’) ‘close’ (no underlying verb)

Some are both causatives *and* synonyms of a form I verb depending on context:

وَقَفَ *wa22af* ‘stop, stand’ or ‘stop, make stop, make stand’

وَصَلَ *waSSal* ‘arrive’, or ‘deliver, make arrive’

A few form IIs mean ‘spend [a specific time]’:

مَسَى *massa* ‘spend an evening’

صَيَّفَ *Sayyaf* ‘to summer’

Some are just verbs with no clear derivational meaning (فَكَّرَ *fakkar*).¹⁵

¹⁵ Although *fakkar* can also mean ‘make/cause someone to think’ or ‘remind of’ when used transitively. In this use it is a normal causative.

Fa33al, yfa33el

زَبَطَ <i>zabbaT</i> 'sort out'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مزبط <i>mzabbeT</i>		مزبط <i>mzabbaT</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	تَربِيط <i>tazbiiT</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	زبط زبطي زبطو <i>zabbeT zabbTi zabbTu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>zabbeT bzabbeT</i>	زبط بزبط	<i>zabbaT@t</i>	زبطت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tzabbeT bétzabbeT</i>	تَربِيط بَترِيط	<i>zabbaT@t</i>	زبطت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tzabbTi bétzabbTi</i>	تَربِيطي بَترِيطي	<i>zabbaTTi</i>	زبطتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yzabbeT bizabbeT</i>	يَربِيط يَربِيط	<i>zabbaT</i>	زبط
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tzabbeT bétzabbeT</i>	تَربِيط بَترِيط	<i>zabbaTet</i>	زبطت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nzabbeT ménzabbeT</i>	نَربِيط نَربِيط	<i>zabbaTna</i>	زبطنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tzabbTu bétzabbTu</i>	تَربِيطو بَترِيطو	<i>zabbaTTu</i>	زبطنا
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yzabbTu bizabbTu</i>	يَربِيطو يَربِيطو	<i>zabbaTu</i>	زبطو

Fa33a, yfa33i

عَبَى 3abba 'fill'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مَعَبِي m3abbi		مَعَبِي m3abba مَعَابِيَة m3abbaaaye (f)	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	تَعَابِيَة té3baaye		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	عَبِي عَبِي عَبُو 3abbi 3abbi 3abbu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	3abbi b3abbi	عَبِي بَعَبِي	3abbeet	عَبَيْت
Inte	t3abbi bét3abbi	تَعَبِي بَتَعَبِي	3abbeet	عَبَيْت
Inti	t3abbi bét3abbi	تَعَبِي بَتَعَبِي	3abbeeti	عَبَيْتِي
Huwwe	y3abbi bi3abbi	يَعَبُو يَعَبُو	3abba	عَبَى
Hiyye	t3abbi bét3abbi	تَعَبِي بَتَعَبِي	3abbet	عَبَتْ
Né7na	n3abbi mén3abbi	نَعَبِي مَنَعَبِي	3abbeena	عَبِينَا
Intu	t3abbu bét3abbu	تَعَبُو بَتَعَبُو	3abbeetu	عَبَيْتُو
Hénnen	y3abbu bi3abbu	يَعَبُو يَعَبُو	3abbu	عَبُو

Form III

Form III (*faa3al*) verbs can be a variety of different things. Although they're not the most common pattern, there are still quite a lot of them. In their conjugation they're pretty similar to fuSHa, with the normal exceptions of *mu-* being replaced by *m-* (including in most *maSdars*, although some verbs typically have fuSHa-style *maSdars* instead).

A lot of form IIIs are transitive verbs with direct objects equivalent to a form I verb plus a preposition:

7aaka 'talk to' < مع حكي 7aka ma3

katab la- 'write to' < كتب لـ kaatab

Talab mén 'demand from' < طالب Taalab

Some of them have a strange relationship with form I verbs from the same root where the form III expresses something like 'try to X' or 'seek to X'. Most of the examples of this though are kind of metaphorical and it's probably not worth getting too bound up in the exact derivational meaning of form III:

khaana2 ma3 'fight, argue with' < خنق khana2 'strangle'

saaba2 ma3 'race with' < سبق sébe2 'come ahead of, precede'

2aatal ma3 'fight with' < قاتل 2atal 'kill'

shaarak ma3 'go into partnership with' < شريك shariik 'partner'

A small number are causatives, usually alternatives to form IIs:

Taala3 'take, bring up' (causative of طلع 'go up'), alternative to Talla3

Finally, lots of them have no obvious relationship with other verbs:

3aana mén 'suffer from' < عانى من

jaakar 'tease, spite' < جاکر

Faa3al, yfaa3el

جاكر <i>jaakar</i> 'tease'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مجاكر <i>mjaaker</i>		مجاكر <i>mjaakar</i>	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	مجاكرة <i>mjaakara</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	جاكر جاكر ي جاكر <i>jaaker jaakri jaakru</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>jaaker bjaaker</i>	جاكر بجاكر	<i>jaakar@t</i>	جاكرت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tjaaker bétjaaker</i>	تجاكر بتجاكر	<i>jaakar@t</i>	جاكرت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tjaakri bétjaakri</i>	تجاكر ي بتجاكر ي	<i>jaakarti</i>	جاكر تي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yjaaker bijaaker</i>	يجاكر بجاكر	<i>jaakar</i>	جاكر
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tjaaker bétjaaker</i>	تجاكر بتجاكر	<i>jaakaret</i>	جاكرت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>njaaker ménjaaker</i>	نجاكر منجاكر	<i>jaakarna</i>	جاكر نا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tjaakru bétjaakru</i>	تجاكرو بتجاكرو	<i>jaakartu</i>	جاكر تو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yjaakru bijaakru</i>	يجاكرو بجاكرو	<i>jaakaru</i>	جاكرو

Faa3a yfaa3i

حاكي 7aaka 'talk to'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	محاكي m7aaki		محاكي m7aaka	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	حاكي حاكي حاكو 7aaki 7aaki 7aaku			
	Present			Past
Ana	7aaki b7aaki	حاكي بحاكي	7aakeet	حاكيت
Inte	t7aaki bet7aaki	تحاكي بتحاكي	7aakeet	حاكيت
Inti	t7aaki bet7aaki	تحاكي بتحاكي	7aakeeti	حاكيتي
Huwwe	y7aaki bi7aaki	يحاكي بحاكي	7aaka	حاكي
Hiyye	t7aaki bet7aaki	تحاكي بتحاكي	7aaket	حاكت
Né7na	n7aaki mén7aaki	نحاكي منحاكي	7aakeena	حاكيننا
Intu	t7aaku bet7aaku	تحاكو بتحاكو	7aakeetu	حاكيتو
Hénnen	y7aaku bi7aaku	يحاكي بحاكو	7aaku	حاكو

Form V

Form V (*tfa33al*) verbs are very common, one of the most common patterns. They are similar to *fuSHa* except that the *fuSHa* *ta-* prefix is *t-* instead. They have *fuSHa*-style *maSdars* on the shape *tafa33ul/tafa33i*, but these are very commonly replaced in practice by the *maSdars* of their form II equivalents (تعلم *t3allam* for example often uses تعليم *ta3liim* as its *maSdar* in practice despite the existence of تعلم *ta3allum*).

Form V is particularly productive as a passive/reciprocal/etc counterpart to form II (*fa33al*) verbs:

تغير *tghayyar* 'be changeable, changed' < غير *ghayyar* 'change'

تصور *tSawwar* 'be photographed' < صور *Sawwar* 'photograph'

تلون *tlawwan* 'be coloured' < لون *lawwan* 'to colour'

Related (possibly even the same category) but with a slightly different translation in English are the intransitive equivalents to form II transitive verbs:

تغير *tghayyar* 'change' (intransitive)

تسرب *tsarrab* 'leak' (intransitive)

Some are verbs expressing 'act like' or 'act...' (although these are more common on pattern VI or as quadriliteral verbs):

تمنن *tmannan* 'ungraciously remind someone of a favour you did them to make them do favours for you' (< منية *ménniyye*)

تبنت *tbannat* 'act girly'

تفنن *tfannan* 'be artistic, do skillfully'

تكفل بـ *tkaffal b-* 'take responsibility for' (be a كفيل for)

Some are synonyms of underlying form II or form I verbs (or both, in some cases):

تضحك *tDa77ak* 'laugh' (ضحك *Da7ak*, *Da77ak*)

تركز *trakkaz* 'concentrate' (ركز *rakkaz*)

Some are verbs of becoming:

تحسن *t7assan* 'improve'

Lots of form Vs have no clear underlying verb:

تفضل *tfaDDal* 'go ahead and...'

Tfa33al yétfa33al

تعلّم t3allam 'learn'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	متعلّم mét3allem		متعلّم mét3allam	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	تعلّم ta3allum		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تعلّم تعلّم تعلّم t3allam t3allami t3allamu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	ét3allam bét3allam	اتعلّم بتعلّم	t3allam@t	تعلّمت
Inte	tét3allam btét3allam	تتعلّم بتتعلّم	t3allam@t	تعلّمت
Inti	tét3allami btét3allami	نتعلّم بتتعلّم	t3allamti	تعلّمتي
Huwwe	yét3allam byét3allam	يتعلّم بيتعلّم	t3allam	تعلّم
Hiyye	tét3allam btét3allam	تتعلّم بتتعلّم	t3allamet	تعلّمت
Né7na	nét3allam mnét3allam	نتعلّم منتعلّم	t3allamna	تعلّمنا
Intu	tét3allamu btét3allamu	تتعلّمو بتتعلّمو	t3allamtu	تعلّمتو
Hénnen	yét3allamu byét3allamu	يتعلّمو بيتعلّمو	t3allamu	تعلّمو

Tfa33a yétfa33a

تخبّى <i>tkhabba</i> 'hide, be hidden'					
	Active Participle		Passive Participle		
	متخبّي <i>métkhabbi</i>		N/A		
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance		
	تخبّي <i>takhabbi</i>		N/A		
	Imperative:				
	تخبّى تخبّي تخبو <i>tkhabba tkhabbi tkhabbu</i>				
	Present		Past		
<i>Ana</i>	<i>étkhabba</i>	<i>bétkhabba</i>	اتخبّى بتخبّى	<i>tkhabbeet</i>	تخبّيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tétkhabba</i>	<i>btétkhabba</i>	نتخبّى بتتخبّى	<i>tkhabbeet</i>	تخبّيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tétkhabbi</i>	<i>btétkhabbi</i>	تتخبّى بتتخبّي	<i>tkhabbeeti</i>	تخبّيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yétkhabba</i>	<i>byétkhabba</i>	يتخبّى بيتخبّى	<i>tkhabba</i>	تخبّى
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tétkhabba</i>	<i>btétkhabba</i>	نتخبّى بتتخبّى	<i>tkhabbet</i>	تخبّيت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nétkhabba</i>	<i>mnétkhabba</i>	نتخبّى منتخبّى	<i>tkhabbeena</i>	تخبّينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tétkhabbu</i>	<i>btétkhabbu</i>	تتخبّو بتتخبّو	<i>tkhabbeetu</i>	تخبّيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yétkhabbu</i>	<i>byétkhabbu</i>	يتخبّو بيتخبّو	<i>tkhabbu</i>	تخبّو

Form VI

Form VI (*tfaa3al*) verbs are very common, one of the most common patterns. They are similar to *fuSHa* except that the *fuSHa* *ta-* prefix is *t-* instead.

Form VI is particularly productive as a passive/reciprocal/etc counterpart to form III (*faa3al*) verbs:

تھاکی مع *t7aaka ma3* 'talk with, be spoken to'

تھاان۲ مع *tkhaana2 ma3* 'argue with, be argued with'

تسا۲ مع *tsaaba2 ma3* 'race with, be raced with'

توافق مع *twaafa2 ma3* 'agree with, be agreed with'

Some of them are verbs expressing 'act like':

تغاشم *tghaasham* 'be naive' (< غشیم *ghashiim*)

تناسی *tnaasa* 'pretend to have forgotten'

تما۲ *tmaaya3* 'act rudely, naughtily' (< مای۳ *maaye3*)

تبالد *tbaalad* 'act slowly, irritatingly' (< بالید *baliid*)

Some senses don't seem to have obvious underlying verbs:

تجاوب مع *tjaawab ma3* 'respond positively to'

Tfaa3al yétfaa3al

تجاوب <i>tjaawab</i> 'respond'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	متجاوب <i>métjaaweb</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	تجاوب <i>tajaawub</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تجاوب تجاوبي تجاوبو <i>tjaawab tjaawabi tjaawabu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>étjaawab</i> <i>bétjaawab</i>	اتجاوب بتجاوب	<i>tjaawab@t</i>	تجاوبت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tétjaawab</i> <i>btétjaawab</i>	تتجاوب بتتجاوب	<i>tjaawab@t</i>	تجاوبت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tétjaawabi</i> <i>btétjaawabi</i>	تتجاوبي بتتجاوبي	<i>tjaawabti</i>	تجاوبتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yétjaawab</i> <i>byétjaawab</i>	يتجاوب بيتجاوب	<i>tjaawab</i>	تجاوب
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tétjaawab</i> <i>btétjaawab</i>	تتجاوب بتتجاوب	<i>tjaawabet</i>	تجاوبت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nétjaawab</i> <i>mnétjaawab</i>	نتجاوب منتجاوب	<i>tjaawabna</i>	تجاوبنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tétjaawabu</i> <i>btétjaawabu</i>	تتجاوبو بتتجاوبو	<i>tjaawabtu</i>	تجاوبتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yétjaawabu</i> <i>byétjaawabu</i>	يتجاوبو بيتجاوبو	<i>tjaawabu</i>	تجاوبو

Tfaa3a yétfaa3a

تْحَاكِي t7aaka 'be spoken to'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مَتْحَاكِي mét7aaki		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	تْحَاكِي ta7aaki		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تْحَاكِي تْحَاكِي تْحَاكُو t7aaka t7aaki t7aaku			
	Present		Past	
Ana	ét7aaka bét7aaka	اتْحَاكِي بِتْحَاكِي	t7aakeet	تْحَاكَيْتْ
Inte	tét7aaka btét7aaka	تَتْحَاكِي بَتْحَاكِي	t7aakeet	تْحَاكَيْتْ
Inti	tét7aaki btét7aaki	تَتْحَاكِي بَتْحَاكِي	t7aakeeti	تْحَاكَيْتِي
Huwwe	yét7aaka byét7aaka	يَتْحَاكِي بِيَتْحَاكِي	t7aaka	تْحَاكِي
Hiyye	tét7aaka btét7aaka	تَتْحَاكِي بَتْحَاكِي	t7aaket	تْحَاكْتْ
Né7na	nét7aaka mnét7aaka	نَتْحَاكِي مَنْتْحَاكِي	t7aakeena	تْحَاكِينَا
Intu	tét7aaku btét7aaku	تَتْحَاكُو بَتْحَاكُو	t7aakeetu	تْحَاكَيْتُو
Hénnen	yét7aaku byét7aaku	يَتْحَاكُو بِيَتْحَاكُو	t7aaku	تْحَاكُو

Form VII

Form VII is exclusively a passive of form I:

انضرب *nDarab* 'be hit'

انقرى *n2ara* 'be read'

Nfa3al/yénfa3al

انمسك <i>nmasak</i> 'be held, caught'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	منمسك <i>ménmasek</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	انمسك انمسي انمسكو <i>nmasek nmaski nmasku</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>énmasek bénmasek</i>	انمسك بنمسك	<i>nmasak@t</i>	انمسكت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>ténmasek bténmasek</i>	تتمسك بتتمسك	<i>nmasak@t</i>	انمسكت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>ténmaski bténmaski</i>	تتمسكي بتتمسكي	<i>nmasakti</i>	انمسكتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yénmasek byénmasek</i>	ينمسك بينمسك	<i>nmasak</i>	انمسك
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>ténmasek bténmasek</i>	تتمسك بتتمسك	<i>nmasket</i>	انمسكت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nénmasek mnénmasek</i>	ننمسك مننمسك	<i>nmasakna</i>	انمسكنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>ténmasku bténmasku</i>	تتمسكو بتتمسكو	<i>nmasaktu</i>	انمسكتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yénmasku byénmasku</i>	ينمسكو بينمسكو	<i>nmasaku</i>	انمسكو

Nfaal/yénfaal

انشاف <i>nshaaf</i> 'be seen					
	Active Participle			Passive Participle	
	منشاف <i>ménshaaf</i>			N/A	
	MaSdar			Noun of Instance	
	N/A			N/A	
	Imperative:				
	انشاف انشافي انشافو <i>nshaaf nshaafi nshaafu</i>				
	Present			Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>énshaaf bénshaaf</i>	انشاف بنشاف	<i>nshéf@t</i>	انشفت	
<i>Inte</i>	<i>ténshaaf bténshaaf</i>	تتشاف بتتشاف	<i>nshéf@t</i>	انشفت	
<i>Inti</i>	<i>ténshaafi bténshaafi</i>	تتشافي بتتشافي	<i>nshéfti</i>	انشفتي	
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yénshaaf byénshaaf</i>	ينشاف بينشاف	<i>nshaaf</i>	انشاف	
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>ténshaaf bténshaaf</i>	تتشاف بتتشاف	<i>nshaafet</i>	انشافت	
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nénshaaf mnénshaaf</i>	ننشاف منشاف	<i>nshéfn</i>	انشفنا	
<i>Intu</i>	<i>ténshaafu bténshaafu</i>	تتشافو بتتشافو	<i>nshéftu</i>	انشفتو	
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yénshaafu byénshaafu</i>	ينشافو بينشافو	<i>nshaafu</i>	انشافو	

Nfa3a/yénfa3a

n3aTa انعطى 'be given'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	منعطى mén3aTi		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	انعطى انعطى انعطو n3aTa n3aTi n3aTu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	én3aTa bén3aTa	انعطى بنعطى	n3aTeet	انعطيت
Inte	tén3aTa btén3aTa	تنعطى بتنعطى	n3aTeet	انعطيت
Inti	tén3aTi btén3aTi	تنعطى بتنعطى	n3aTeeti	انعطيتي
Huwwe	yén3aTa byén3aTa	ينعطى بينعطى	n3aTa	انعطى
Hiyye	tén3aTa btén3aTa	تنعطى بتنعطى	n3aTet	انعطت
Né7na	nén3aTa mnén3aTa	ننعطى مننعطى	n3aTeena	انعطنا
Intu	tén3aTu btén3aTu	تنعطو بتنعطو	n3aTeetu	انعطيتو
Hénnen	yén3aTu byén3aTu	ينعطو بينعطو	n3aTu	انعطو

Nfa33/yénfa33

انكب <i>nkabb</i> 'be thrown away'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	منكب <i>ménkabb</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	انكب انكبي انكبو <i>nkabb nkabbi nkabbu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>énkabb bénkabb</i>	انكب بنكب	<i>nkabbeet</i>	انكبيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>ténkabb bténkabb</i>	تنكب بتنكب	<i>nkabbeet</i>	انكبيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>ténkabbi bténkabbi</i>	تنكبي بتنكبي	<i>nkabbeeti</i>	انكبيتني
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yénkabb byénkabb</i>	ينكب بينكب	<i>nkabb</i>	انكب
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>ténkabb bténkabb</i>	تنكب بتنكب	<i>nkabbet</i>	انكبت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nénkabb mnénkabb</i>	ننكب مننكب	<i>nkabbeena</i>	انكبينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>ténkabbu bténkabbu</i>	تنكبو بتنكبو	<i>nkabbeetu</i>	انكبيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yénkabbu byénkabbu</i>	ينكبو بينكبو	<i>nkabbu</i>	انكبو

Form VIII

The meaning of form VIII is famously difficult to pin down, and its formation is also quite difficult. In terms of vowelings it is basically identical to form VII, but it's formed (in colloquial as in *fuSHa*) by the insertion of a *-t-* after the first root consonant. As in *fuSHa* this *t* undergoes and causes some strange assimilations, which it's important to be aware of, but these are explained elsewhere and since you're unlikely to need to derive form VIII verbs it's more important to be familiar with the shapes:¹⁶

اتكل *ttakal* (< **wtakal* < *wakkal*) 'depend'

اضطر *DTarr* (< **Dtarr* < *Daruura*) 'be obligated to'

اتخذ *ttakhaz* (< *2akhaz*) 'take (a decision)'

Many form VIIIs are reflexive/reciprocal /etc versions of form I (or occasionally non-form I) verbs:

ارتبط بـ *rtabaT b-* 'connect, link together with' < ربط *rabaT* 'tie'

استوى *stawa* 'be cooked, finish cooking'

التقى *lta2a* 'meet (one another)'

ازدهر *zdahar* 'flower'

Many are passive, sometimes alternatives of form VIIs:

اقتنع بـ *qtana3 b-* 'be convinced of' < قنع *qana3*

انتسى *ntasa* 'be forgotten' < نسي *nési*

استلم *stalam* 'receive' < سلم *sallam* 'give to'

Some are more specific/abstract versions of form I verbs:

افتتح *ftata7* 'open (a meeting, a shopping centre)'

اتخذ *ttakhaz* 'take on, adopt' < اخذ *akhaz*¹⁷

¹⁶ Lots of the assimilations reflected in spelling in form VIII verbs actually occur naturally in terms of how the language is actually pronounced.

¹⁷ Though this one maybe doesn't count since it presumably exists in *fuSHa* instead and *akhaz* is not a common verb in *3aamiyye*.

Fta3al/yéfta3al

اشتغل shtaghal 'work'					
	Active Participle		Passive Participle		
	N/A		N/A		
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance		
	شغل shégh@l		N/A		
	Imperative:				
	اشتغل اشتغلي اشتغلو sht@ghel shtéghli sht@ghlu				
	Present			Past	
Ana	éshtéghel	béshtéghel	اشتغل بشتغل	shtaghal@t	اشتغلت
Inte	téshtéghel	btéshtéghel	تشتغل بتشتغل	shtaghal@t	اشتغلت
Inti	téshtéghli	btéshtéghli	تشتغلي بتشتغلي	shtaghalti	اشتغلتي
Huwwe	yéshtéghel	byéshtéghel	يشتغل بيشتغل	shtaghal	اشتغل
Hiyye	téshtéghel	btéshtéghel	تشتغل بتشتغل	shtaghlet	اشتغلت
Né7na	néshtéghel	mnéshtéghel	نشتغل منشتغل	shtaghalna	اشتغلنا
Intu	téshtéghlu	btéshtéghlu	تشتغلو بتشتغلو	shtaghaltu	اشتغلنو
Hénnen	yéshtéghlu	byéshtéghlu	يشتغلو بيشتغلو	shtaghalu	اشتغلو

Ftaal/yéftaal

ارتاح <i>rtaa7</i> 'rest'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مرتاح <i>mértaa7</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	ارتياح <i>irtiyaa7</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	ارتاح ارتاحي ارتاحو <i>rtaa7 rtaa7i rtaa7u</i>			
	Present			Past
<i>Ana</i>	<i>értaa7 bértaa7</i>	ارتاح برتاح	<i>rté7@t</i>	ارتحت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tértaa7 btértaa7</i>	ترتاح بترتاح	<i>rté7@t</i>	ارتحت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tértaa7i btértaa7i</i>	ترتاحي بترتاحي	<i>rté7ti</i>	ارتحتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yértaa7 byértaa7</i>	يرتاح بيرتاح	<i>rtaa7</i>	ارتاح
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tértaa7 btértaa7</i>	ترتاح بترتاح	<i>rtaa7et</i>	ارتاحت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nértaa7 mnértaa7</i>	نرتاح منرتاح	<i>rté7na</i>	ارتحنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tértaa7u btértaa7u</i>	ترتاحو بترتاحو	<i>rté7tu</i>	ارتحتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yértaa7u byértaa7u</i>	يرتاحو بيرتاحو	<i>rtaa7u</i>	ارتاحو

Fta3a/yéfta3i

التقى <i>Ita2a</i> 'meet'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	ملتقي <i>mélta2i</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	التقاء <i>iltiqaa2</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	التقى التقى التقو <i>Ita2i Ita2i Ita2u</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>élta2i bélta2i</i>	التقى يلتقى	<i>Ita2eet</i>	التقيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>télta2i btélta2i</i>	تلتقى بتلتقى	<i>Ita2eet</i>	التقيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>télta2i btélta2i</i>	تلتقى بتلتقى	<i>Ita2eeti</i>	التقيت
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yélta2i byélta2i</i>	يلتقى بيلتقى	<i>Ita2a</i>	التقى
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>télta2i btélta2i</i>	تلتقى بتلتقى	<i>Ita2et</i>	التقت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nélta2i mnélta2i</i>	نلتقى منلتقى	<i>Ita2eena</i>	التقينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>télta2u btélta2u</i>	تلتقو بتلتقو	<i>Ita2eetu</i>	التقيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yélta2u byélta2u</i>	يلتقو بيلتقو	<i>Ita2u</i>	التقو

Ftall/yéftall

اضطر <i>DTarr</i> 'be obliged to'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مضطر <i>méDTarr</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	اضطر اضطر اضطر <i>DTarr DTarri DTarru</i>			
	Present			Past
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éDTarr béDTarr</i>	اضطر بضطر	<i>DTarreet</i>	اضطريت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téDTarr btéDTarr</i>	تضطر بتضطر	<i>DTarreet</i>	اضطريت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téDTarr btéDTarr</i>	تضطر بتضطر	<i>DTarreeti</i>	اضطريت
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéDTarr byéDTarr</i>	يضطر بيضطر	<i>DTarr</i>	اضطر
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téDTarr btéDTarr</i>	تضطر بتضطر	<i>DTarret</i>	اضطرت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néDTarr mnéDTarr</i>	نضطر منضطر	<i>DTarreena</i>	اضطرينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>btéDTarru btéDTarru</i>	تضطرو بتضطرو	<i>DTarreetu</i>	اضطريتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéDTarru byéDTarru</i>	يضطرو بيضطرو	<i>DTarru</i>	اضطرو

Form IX

Form IX verbs are quite rare, and only a few of them exist. In *fuSHa* all *if3alla* verbs are by their nature doubled verbs in terms of conjugation, and the same applies in colloquial, but like other doubled verbs the conjugation strategy used for form IXs is formed by analogy with finally-weak/defective verbs and avoids breaking up the cluster: *7marr-eet* for example.

All (almost all?) form IX verbs are associated with an *af3al* adjective of colour or defect and are verbs of becoming:

اسودّ *swadd* 'turn black' < اسود *aswad* 'black'

احمّر *7marr* 'turn red' < احمر *a7mar* 'red'

اسمرّ *smarr* 'turn brown-skinned, tan' < اسمر *asmar* 'tanned, brown-skinned'

F3all/yéf3all

اسود <i>swadd</i> ‘turn black’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مَسود <i>méswadd</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	اسود اسودي اسودو <i>swadd swaddi swaddu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éSwadd béSwadd</i>	اسود بَسود	<i>swaddeet</i>	اسوديت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téSwadd btéSwadd</i>	تَسود بَتَسود	<i>swaddeet</i>	اسوديت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téSwadd btéSwadd</i>	تَسود بَتَسود	<i>swaddeeti</i>	اسوديتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéSwadd byéSwadd</i>	يَسود بَيَسود	<i>swadd</i>	اسود
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téSwadd btéSwadd</i>	تَسود بَتَسود	<i>swaddet</i>	اسودت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néSwadd mnéSwadd</i>	نَسود مَنَسود	<i>swaddeena</i>	اسودينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>btéSwaddu btéSwaddu</i>	تَسودو بَتَسودو	<i>swaddeetu</i>	اسوديتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéSwaddu byéSwaddu</i>	يَسودو بَيَسودو	<i>swaddu</i>	اسودو

Form X

Form X (*staf3al*) verbs are formed relatively simply and in a way similar to *fuSHa*. In fuSHa teaching some bright spark hit on the idea of explaining them in terms of ‘seek to do X’, which is actually a reasonably good approximation of the meaning of quite a lot of form Xs assuming you don’t get too excited and literally go about translating them that way instead of using it as a handy guide to guess the meaning. If we want to approach it more accurately, however, *staf3al* verbs have quite a few different meanings.

Many common form Xs are derived from adjectives and express ‘consider something X’:

استغرب *staghrah* ‘find strange’

استحسن *sta7san* ‘consider good, better’

استهبل على *stahbal 3ala* ‘treat like an idiot’

Some are verbs of becoming (-anise):

استعرب *sta3rab* ‘become Arab’, ‘act like an Arab’

استغرب *staghrah* ‘become Westernised’, ‘act westernised’

Some (including these two in some contexts) are verbs of action:

استرجل *starjal* ‘act masculine (of a woman)’

The pattern is also used in a few cases to translate the *-ist* of English e.g. ‘Orientalist’, with accompanying (though rare) verbs:

مستشرق *mustashreq* ‘Orientalist’

Some (and these are the ones that most fit ‘seek’) are derived from (typically but not exclusively form I) verbs with a meaning like ‘seek for X to do Y’ where Y is the underlying verb:

استعان *sta3aan* ‘ask for someone’s help’ < عان ‘help’

استقال *staqaal* ‘resign’ < اقال ‘release from a job’

Many seem to straightforwardly fit with ‘seek to’ plus underlying verb (without any of the strange additional actor stuff going on above’):

استولى *stawla* ‘take control of’

استوطن *stawTan* ‘settle, colonise’

staf3al; yéstaf3el

استغرب <i>staghreb</i> ‘find strange, be surprised’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مستغرب <i>méstaghreb</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	استغراب <i>istighraab</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	استغرب استغربي استغربو <i>staghreb staghربي staghbu</i>			
	Present			Past
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éStaghreb béStaghreb</i>	استغرب بستغرب	<i>staghreb@t</i>	استغربت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téStaghreb btéStaghreb</i>	تستغرب بتستغرب	<i>staghreb@t</i>	استغربت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téStagh@rbi btéStagh@rbi</i>	تستغرب بتستغرب	<i>staghrebti</i>	استغربتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéStaghreb byéStaghreb</i>	يستغرب بيستغرب	<i>staghreb</i>	استغرب
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téStaghreb btéStaghreb</i>	تستغرب بتستغرب	<i>staghrebti</i>	استغربت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néStaghreb mnéStaghreb</i>	نستغرب منستغرب	<i>staghrebna</i>	استغربنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>btéStagh@rbi btéStagh@rbi</i>	تستغربو بتستغربو	<i>staghrebti</i>	استغربتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéStagh@rbi byéStagh@rbi</i>	يستغربو بيستغربو	<i>staghrebti</i>	استغربو

Stafaal; yéstafiil

استقال <i>staqaal</i> 'resign'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مستقيل <i>méstaqiil</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	استقالة <i>istiqaale</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	استقيل استقيلي استقيلو <i>staqiil staqiili staqiilu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éStaqiil béStaqiil</i>	استقيل بستقيل	<i>staqélt</i>	استقلت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téStaqiil btéStaqiil</i>	تستقيل بتستقيل	<i>staqélt</i>	استقلت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téStaqiil btéStaqiil</i>	تستقيل بتستقيل	<i>staqélti</i>	استقلتني
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéStaqiil byéStaqiil</i>	يستقيل بيستقيل	<i>staqaal</i>	استقال
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téStaqiil btéStaqiil</i>	تستقيل بتستقيل	<i>staqaalet</i>	استقلت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néStaqiil mnéStaqiil</i>	نستقيل منستقيل	<i>staqélna</i>	استقلنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>btéStaqiilu btéStaqiilu</i>	تستقيلو بتستقيلو	<i>staqéltu</i>	اضطريتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéStaqiilu byéStaqiilu</i>	يستقيلو بيستقيلو	<i>staqaalu</i>	اضطرو

stawla; yéstawli

استولى <i>stawla</i> ‘take over’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مستولي <i>méstawli</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	استيلاء <i>istiilaa2</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	استولي استولي استولو <i>stawli stawli stawlu</i>			
	Present			Past
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éstawli béstawli</i>	استولي يستولي	<i>stawleet</i>	استوليت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téstawli btéstawli</i>	تستولي بتستولي	<i>stawleet</i>	استوليت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téstawli btéstawli</i>	تستوليبيبتستولي	<i>stawleeti</i>	استوليتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéstawli byéstawli</i>	يستولي بيستولي	<i>stawla</i>	استولى
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téstawli btéstawli</i>	تستولي بتستولي	<i>stawlet</i>	استولت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néstawli mnéstawli</i>	نستولي منستولي	<i>stawleena</i>	استولينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>téstawlu btéstawlu</i>	تستولو بتستولو	<i>stawleetu</i>	استوليتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéstawlu byéstawlu</i>	يستولو بيستولو	<i>stawlu</i>	استولو

staghall; yéstaghell

استغل <i>staghall</i> 'exploit'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مستغل <i>méstaghéll</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	استغلال <i>istighlaal</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	استغل استغلي استغلو <i>staghéll staghéllu staghéllu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>éstaghéll béstaghéll</i>	استغل يستغل	<i>staghalleet</i>	استغلّيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>téstaghéll btéstaghéll</i>	تستغل بتستغل	<i>staghalleet</i>	استغلّيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>téstaghélli btéstaghélli</i>	تستغلي بتستغلي	<i>staghalleeti</i>	استغلّيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yéstaghéll byéstaghéll</i>	يستغل بيستغل	<i>staghall</i>	استغل
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>téstaghéll btéstaghéll</i>	تستغل بتستغل	<i>staghallet</i>	استغلّت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>néstaghéll mnéstaghéll</i>	نستغل منستغل	<i>staghalleena</i>	استغلّينا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>téstaghéllu btéstaghéllu</i>	تستغلو بتستغلو	<i>staghalleetu</i>	استغلّيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yéstaghéllu bvéstaghéllu</i>	يستغلو بيستغلو	<i>staghallu</i>	استغلو

Quadriliteral verbs

Unlike the other patterns given here, quadriliteral verbs are not a derivational pattern in themselves – ‘quadriliteral’ simply describes any verb with four letters in its root instead of three. Although they are not unified by meaning, however, they *do* conveniently conjugate on the same four patterns.

According to an Arabic teacher I had once, quadrilaterals are all supposedly either loanwords (albeit sometimes very old ones) or onomatopoeia. And in fact, many of them are foreign loans:

سشوار *sashwar* ‘blow-dry’ < سشوار *sešhaar* ‘hairedrier’ (French *séchoir*)

تليفون *telefoon* < تلفن *talfan* ‘phone up’

شنكال *shangaal* ‘hook’ < شنكال *shangal* ‘link arms with’ < Turkish *çengel*

شنطة *shanTa* ‘bag’ < شنطة *tshanTaT* ‘be tossed from place to place’ < Turkish *çanta*

برنامه *barnaamaj* ‘programme’ < برنامه *barmaj* ‘programme’ < Persian برنامه¹⁸

Many, however, are derived from other native words, and in any case lots of these borrowings are very solidly nativised to the extent speakers no longer recognise that they’re foreign.

خازوق *khaazuu2* ‘impaling stake’ < خوزق *khooza2* ‘screw over’

بس *bass* ‘but’ < بسبس *basbas* ‘keep giving reasons not to do something’

Many onomatopoeias are also quadriliteral:

زقزق *za2za2* ‘squeak’

طقطق *Ta2Ta2* ‘pop, crack’

Some are derived from other derived words whilst maintaining one of the added consonants:

مركز *markaz* ‘centre’ < تمرکز *tmarkaz* ‘be centred on’

Many verbs analysed as quadriliteral in fact have an identifiable underlying three-letter root and are actually derivations on one of a large number of less common derivational patterns not usually treated in fuSHa (although some of them exist there too). These patterns have various different meanings – many are verbs of becoming or action:

ولد *walad* ‘boy’ < تولدن *twaldan* ‘act childishly’

اصفر *aSfar* ‘yellow’ < صفرن *Safran* ‘turn yellow’

برد *bar@d* ‘cold’ < بورد *boorad* ‘cool down’

¹⁸ This one is old enough that the Persian word has lost the final –g borrowed into Arabic as –j.

Many have a meaning which is similar to their underlying verb but expresses drawn out action. These are probably the most common derivations which can be done on the fly, and are similar to the English transformation of verbs using adverbs like ‘around’:

- تناطوط *tnaTwaT* ‘jump around’ < ناٹ *naTT* ‘jump’ (*tfa3wal*)
- ترقوص *tra2waS* ‘dance around’ < رقص *ra2aS* ‘dance’
- نكوش *nakwash* ‘root around in’ < نكش *nakash* ‘root through’ (*fa3wal*)
- لحوس *la7was* ‘lick at’ < لّجس *la7as* ‘lick’
- طزطرز *TazTaz* ‘fart repeatedly, make a pooting noise’ < طز *Tazz* ‘fart’
- طرق *TarTa2* ‘tap repeatedly’ < طرق *Tara2* ‘hit’
- بصبص *baSbaS* ‘look around, peek around’ < بص *baSS* ‘look’¹⁹

Conjugation-wise, there are four major variations: sound (*fa3lal* etc), second-letter weak (*foo3al*, *fee3al*) and their final-weak equivalents (*fa3la*, *foo3a/fee3a*). These are modelled on form II and form IV. Each of these simple patterns also has an equivalent with the *t*- prefix (*tfa3lal*, *tfoo3al/tfee3al*, *tfa3la*, *tfoo3a/tfee3a*) modelled on form V and form VI. The uses of the *t*- forms generally line up with other *t*- forms. The passives of quadrilateral verbs for example is formed this way:

- تبرمج *tbarmaj* ‘be programmed’ < برمج *barmaj* ‘programme’
- تخوزق *tkhooza2* ‘get screwed over’ < خوزق *khooza2* ‘screw over’
- تشنطط *tshanTaT* ‘be tossed from place to place’ < شنطط *shanTaT* ‘toss from place to place’

Likewise, some *t*- verbs are the reciprocal (etc) equivalent of an underlying verb:

- تشنكل *tshangal* ‘link arms with one another’ < شنكل *shangal* ‘link arms with’

Generally verbs of action in particular are formed on the *t*- patterns.

- تفهمن *tfahman* ‘patronise, be a know-it-all’ < فهم *féhem*²⁰ ‘understand’
- تفلسف *tfalsaf* ‘philosophise, act like a philosopher’ < فلسفة *falsafe* ‘philosophy’
- تفصحن *tfaSHan* ‘use big words in an attempt to sound educated’ < فصحي *fuSHa*

¹⁹ The underlying verb here isn’t really used in Syrian.

²⁰ This might be a case of retaining a consonant from a different derived form, i.e. فهمان *fahmaan* ‘wise’.

Fa3fa3, yfa3fe3

زقزق za2za2 'squeak'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مزقزق mza2ze2		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	زقزقة za2za2a		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	زقزق زقزقي زقزقو za2ze2 za2@z2i za2@z2u			
	Present		Past	
Ana	za2ze2 bza2ze2	زقزق بزقزق	za2za2@t	زقزقت
Inte	tza2ze2 bétza2ze2	تزقزق بتزقزق	za2za2@t	زقزقت
Inti	tza2@z2i bétza2@z2i	تزقزقي بتزقزقي	za2za2Ti	زقزقتي
Huwwe	yza2ze2 biza2ze2	يزقزق يزقزق	za2za2	زقزق
Hiyye	tza2ze2 bétza2ze2	تزقزق بتزقزق	za2za2et	زقزقت
Né7na	nza2ze2 ménza2ze2	نزقزق منزقزق	za2za2na	زقزقنا
Intu	tza2@z2u bétza2@z2u	تزقزقو بتزقزقو	za2za2Tu	زقزقنا
Hénnen	yza2@z2u biza2@z2u	يزقزقو يزقزقو	za2za2u	زقزقو

Tfa3lal yétfa3lal

تدحرج tda7raj 'roll'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	متدحرج métda7rej		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	دحرجة da7raje		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تدحرج تدحرجي تدحرجو tda7raj tda7raji tda7raju			
	Present			Past
Ana	étda7raj bétda7raj	تدحرج بتدحرج	tda7raj@t	تدحرجت
Inte	tétda7raj btétda7raj	تتدحرج بتتدحرج	tda7raj@t	تدحرجت
Inti	tétda7raji btétda7raji	تتدحرجي بتتدحرجي	tda7rajTi	تدحرجتي
Huwwe	yétda7raj byétda7raj	يتدحرج يتدحرج	tda7raj	تدحرج
Hiyye	tétda7raj btétda7raj	تتدحرج بتتدحرج	tda7rajet	تدحرجت
Né7na	nétda7raj mnétda7raj	نتدحرج منتدحرج	tda7rajna	تدحرجنا
Intu	tétda7raju btétda7raju	تتدحرجو بتتدحرجو	tda7rajTu	تدحرجنا
Hénnen	yétda7raju byétda7raju	يتدحرجو يتدحرجو	tda7raju	تدحرجو

Fa3la, yfa3li

Ta3ma طعمى ‘feed’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مطعمى mTa3mi		مطعمى mTa3ma	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	طعمى طعمى طعمو Ta3mi Ta3mi Ta3mu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	Ta3mi bTa3mi	طعمى بطعمى	Ta3meet	طعميت
Inte	tTa3mi bétTa3mi	تطعمى بتطعمى	Ta3meet	طعميت
Inti	tTa3mi bétTa3mi	تطعمى بتطعمى	Ta3meeti	طعميتي
Huwwe	yTa3mi biTa3mi	يطعمى بطعمى	Ta3ma	طعمى
Hiyye	tTa3mi bétTa3mi	تطعمى بتطعمى	Ta3met	طعمت
Né7na	nTa3mi ménTa3mi	نطعمى منطعمى	Ta3meena	طعمينا
Intu	tTa3mu bétTa3mu	تطعمو بتطعمو	Ta3meetu	طعميتو
Hénnen	yTa3mu biTa3mu	يطعمو بطعمو	Ta3mu	طعمو

Tfa3la yétfa3la

تفرشی <i>tfarsha</i> 'be brushed'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	متفرشي <i>métfarshi</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تفرشی تفرشي تفرشو <i>tfarsha tfarshi tfarshu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>étfarsha bétfarsha</i>	اتفرشی بتفرشي	<i>tfarsheet</i>	تفرشيت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tétfarsha btétfarsha</i>	تتفرشي بتتفرشي	<i>tfarsheet</i>	تفرشيت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tétfarshi btétfarshi</i>	تتفرشي بتتفرشي	<i>tfarsheeti</i>	تفرشيتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yétfarsha byétfarsha</i>	يتفرشي بيتفرشي	<i>tfarsha</i>	تفرشي
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tétfarsha btétfarsha</i>	تتفرشي بتتفرشي	<i>tfarshet</i>	تفرشت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nétfarsha mnétfarsha</i>	نتفرشي منتفرشي	<i>tfarsheena</i>	تفرشنا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tétfarshu btétfarshu</i>	تتفرشو بتتفرشو	<i>tfarsheetu</i>	تفرشيتو
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yétfarshu byétfarshu</i>	يتفرشو بيتفرشو	<i>tfarshu</i>	تفرشو

Foo3an, yfoo3en

دوژن doozan 'tune'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مدوژن mdoozen		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	دوژنه doozane		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	دوژن دوژني دوژنو doozen doozni dooznu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	doozen bdoozen	دوژن بدوژن	doozan@t	دوژنت
Inte	tdoozen bétdoozen	تدوژن بتدوژن	doozan@t	دوژنت
Inti	tdoozni bétdoozni	تدوژني بتدوژني	doozanti	دوژنتي
Huwwe	ydoozen bidoozen	يدوژن بدوژن	doozan	دوژن
Hiyye	tdoozen bétdoozen	تدوژن بتدوژن	doozanet	دوژنت
Né7na	ndoozen méndoozen	ندوژن مندوژن	doozanna	دوژننا
Intu	tdooznu bétdooznu	تدوژنو بتدوژنو	doozantu	دوژننا
Hénnen	ydooznu bidooznu	يدوژنو بدوژنو	doozanu	دوژنو

Tfoo3an, yétfoo3an

تدوژن <i>tdoozan</i> 'be tuned'				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	متدوژن <i>metdoozen</i>		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	دوژنه <i>doozane</i>		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تدوژن تدوژني تدوژنو <i>tdoozan tdoozani tdoozanu</i>			
	Present		Past	
<i>Ana</i>	<i>étdoozan bétdoozan</i>	تدوژن بتدوژن	<i>tdoozan@t</i>	تدوژنت
<i>Inte</i>	<i>tétdoozan btétdoozan</i>	تتدوژن بتتدوژن	<i>tdoozan@t</i>	تدوژنت
<i>Inti</i>	<i>tétdoozani btétdoozani</i>	تتدوژني بتتدوژني	<i>tdoozanti</i>	تدوژنتي
<i>Huwwe</i>	<i>yétdoozan byétdoozan</i>	يتدوژن بتدوژن	<i>tdoozan</i>	تدوژن
<i>Hiyye</i>	<i>tétdoozan btétdoozan</i>	تتدوژن بتتدوژن	<i>tdoozanet</i>	تدوژنت
<i>Né7na</i>	<i>nétdoozan mnétdoozan</i>	ندتدوژن مندوژن	<i>tdoozanna</i>	تدوژننا
<i>Intu</i>	<i>tétdoozanu btétdoozanu</i>	تتدوژنو بتتدوژنو	<i>tdoozantu</i>	تدوژننا
<i>Hénnen</i>	<i>yétdoozanu byétdoozanu</i>	يتدوژنو بتدوژنو	<i>tdoozanu</i>	تدوژنو

Foo3a, yfoo3i

booya بويى ‘polish’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مبويى mbooyi		مبويى mbooya	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	بويى بويى بويو booyi booyi booyu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	booyi bbooyi	بويى ببويى	booyeet	بوييت
Inte	tbooyi bétbooyi	تبويى بتبويى	booyeet	تبوييت
Inti	tbooyi bétbooyi	تبويى بتبويى	booyeeti	تبوييتى
Huwwe	ybooyi bibooyi	يبويى ببويى	booya	بويى
Hiyye	tbooyi bétbooyi	تبويى بتبويى	booyet	تبوييت
Né7na	nbooyi ménbooyi	نبويى مڤبويى	booyeena	بويينا
Intu	tbooyu bétbooyu	تبويو بتبويو	booyeetu	تبوييتو
Hénnen	ybooyu bibooyu	يبويو ببويو	booyu	بويو

tfoo3a, yétfoo3i

تَبُوِي tbooya ‘be polished’				
	Active Participle		Passive Participle	
	مَتَبُوِي mé t booyi		N/A	
	MaSdar		Noun of Instance	
	N/A		N/A	
	Imperative:			
	تَبُوِي تَبُوِي تَبُوُو tbooya tbooyi tbooyu			
	Present		Past	
Ana	étb o oya bétb o oya	اَتَبُوِي اِتَبُوِي	tbooyeet	تَبُوِيِيَت
Inte	tétb o oya btétb o oya	تَتَبُوِي تِتَبُوِي	tbooyeet	تَبُوِيِيَت
Inti	tétb o oyi btétb o oyi	تَتَبُوِي تِتَبُوِي	tbooyeeti	تَبُوِيِيَتِي
Huwwe	yétb o oya byétb o oya	يَتَبُوِي بِيَتَبُوِي	tbooya	تَبُوِي
Hiyye	tétb o oya btétb o oya	تَتَبُوِي تِتَبُوِي	tbooyet	تَبُوِيَت
Né7na	nétb o oya mnétb o oya	نَتَبُوِي مَنَتَبُوِي	tbooyeena	تَبُوِيِنَا
Intu	tétb o oyu btétb o oyu	تَتَبُوُو تِتَبُوُو	tbooyeetu	تَبُوِيِيَتُو
Hénnen	yétb o oyu byétb o oyu	يَتَبُوُو بِيَتَبُوُو	tbooyu	تَبُوُو