The Hebrew letters האותיות

Right to left: Hebrew is written and read from right to left. The letters don't join, and there are no capital letters. **Romanization on this sheet:** kh is a throaty h, as in Scottish loch, ts is the ts in cats, and a hyphen joins a little word to the front (ha-bayit, the house). Stress usually falls on the last part of a word.

The 22 letters, in alphabet order

1 **א** **alef** **silent** carries a vowel אבא aba dad	2 **ב** **bet** **b, v** b with a dot, v without בית bayit house	3 **ג** **gimel** **g** g as in go גדול gadol big	4 **ד** **dalet** **d** d as in dog דג dag fish	5 **ה** **he** **h** h; silent at the end הר har mountain	6 **ו** **vav** **v, o, u** v; also the vowels o, u ורד vered rose
7 **ז** **zayin** **z** z as in zoo זמן zman time	8 **ח** **khet** **kh** a throaty h, as in loch חלב khalav milk	9 **ט** **tet** **t** t as in ten טוב tov good	10 **י** **yod** **y, i** y; also the vowel i ילד yeled boy, child	11 **כ** end **ך** **kaf** **k, kh** k with a dot, kh without כלב kelev dog	12 **ל** **lamed** **l** l as in let לחם lekhem bread
13 **מ** end **ם** **mem** **m** m as in man מים mayim water	14 **נ** end **ן** **nun** **n** n as in no נר ner candle	15 **ס** **samekh** **s** s as in sun ספר sefer book	16 **ע** **ayin** **silent** like alef, for most people עיר ir city	17 **פ** end **ף** **pe** **p, f** p with a dot, f without פה pe mouth	18 **צ** end **ץ** **tsadi** **ts** ts as in cats צבע tseva colour
19 **ק** **kuf** **k** k as in kite קפה kafe coffee	20 **ר** **resh** **r** a soft r from the throat רגל regel leg, foot	21 **ש** **shin** **sh, s** a dot on the right is sh, on the left s שמש shemesh sun	22 **ת** **tav** **t** t, the same as ט תפוח tapuakh apple		

Five letters change at the end

כ at the end is ך: דרך derekh, way

מ at the end is ם: שלום shalom, hello; peace

נ at the end is ן: בן ben, son

פ at the end is ף: כסף kesef, money

צ at the end is ץ: עץ ets, tree

Letters that look alike

ב / כ: ב has a little foot at the bottom; כ is round

ד / ר: ד has a sharp corner; ר is round

ה / ח / ת: ה has a gap at the top left; ח is closed; ת has a foot on the left

ו / ז / ן: ז has a cap; ן goes below the line

ס / ם: ס is round; ם has square corners

A dot changes the sound

בּ b, ב v

כּ k, כ kh

פּ p, פ f

שׁ sh, שׂ s

Subtitles leave the dot out. At the start of a word it's usually b, k, p: כלב kelev, dog.

New sounds from other languages: a small mark after a letter, ’, gives sounds Hebrew didn't have: ג’ is j, צ’ is ch, ז’ is zh. So צ’יפס chips is chips.

Vowels התנועות

Letters are mostly consonants: Hebrew writes the vowels as small dots and lines under and over the letters, called niqqud. Subtitles, signs, books and phones leave them out, so you read ספר as סֵפֶר sefer, book, from the shape of the word. Children's books, poems and learners' texts keep them.

The main vowel marks, shown on מ

מַ / מָ	מֶ / מֵ	מִ	מוֹ / מֹ	מוּ / מֻ	מְ
ma / ma	**me / me**	**mi**	**mo / mo**	**mu / mu**	**me**
kamatz, patach	segol, tzere	hiriq	holam	kubutz, shuruk	shva: a quick e, or nothing

Two marks, one sound: kamatz and patach both say a, segol and tzere both say e. They were different long ago, and today they only change the spelling.

The same word, with and without

With niqqud	As you'll see it	Say	Meaning
שָׁלוֹם	שלום	shalom	hello
תּוֹדָה	תודה	toda	thank you
יֶלֶד	ילד	yeled	boy
סֵפֶר	ספר	sefer	book

ו and י as vowels

A few letters help you read: without niqqud, ו often stands for o or u, and י for i or e. The vowels a and e usually have no letter at all, so ספר is sefer.

טוב	הוא	שיר	ילדים
tov	hu	shir	yeladim
good: here it's o	he: here it's u	song: here it's i	children: y at the start, i near the end

Easier than it looks: there are no capital letters and no joined letters, and each word has one spelling. Handwriting uses rounder shapes, but subtitles use the print letters on this sheet.

How words work דקדוק

No word for a: בית bayit is a house, or just house. To say the, put ה ha- on the front of the word.

The: ha-

הבית ha-bayit the house	הילד ha-yeled the boy	העיר ha-ir the city	הקפה ha-kafe the coffee

And, in, to, from: one letter on the front

ואני ve-ani and I	בבית ba-bayit at home, in the house	לים la-yam to the sea	מהעבודה me-ha-avoda from work

Watch for these letters at the start: ו, ב, ל, מ and ה often aren't part of the word. With the, be- and le- become ba- and la-: בבית ba-bayit, at home.

Masculine and feminine

masculine

no special ending

ילד yeled, boy

חבר khaver, friend

סטודנט student, student

feminine

most end in ה or ת

ילדה yalda, girl

חברה khavera, friend

סטודנטית studentit, student

Verbs change too: a man and a woman say I love differently, and so do he and she: הוא אוהב hu ohev, היא אוהבת hi ohevet.

אני אוהב ani ohev I love (a man says)	אני אוהבת ani ohevet I love (a woman says)	אנחנו אוהבים anakhnu ohavim we love

I, you, he, she, we

אני ani I	אתה ata you (to a man)	את at you (to a woman)	הוא hu he	היא hi she	אנחנו anakhnu we

No is or are

אני סטודנט. ani student. I'm a student.	היא מורה. hi mora. She's a teacher.	הבית גדול. ha-bayit gadol. The house is big.

Not and questions: put לא lo before the verb: אני לא יודע ani lo yodea, I don't know. A question is the same words with your voice going up: אתה סטודנט? ata student? Are you a student? Describing words come after: הבית הגדול ha-bayit ha-gadol is the big house, and הבית גדול ha-bayit gadol is a sentence: the house is big.

The first 178 words מילים ראשונות

How: learn five a day, then listen for them in shows. *(Notes in brackets)* say how a word is used.

Greetings and survival

שלום shalom
hello, and also goodbye *(it means peace)*

בוקר טוב boker tov
good morning

ערב טוב erev tov
good evening

לילה טוב laila tov
good night

מה שלומך? ma shlomkha?
how are you? *(to a woman: ma shlomekh?)*

מה נשמע? ma nishma?
how's it going?

מה המצב? ma ha-matsav?
what's up? *(casual)*

טוב, תודה tov, toda
fine, thanks

תודה toda
thank you

תודה רבה toda raba
thank you very much

בבקשה bevakasha
please; also you're welcome

סליחה slikha
sorry; excuse me

להתראות lehitraot
goodbye, see you

ביי bye
bye: people say it a lot

כן ken
yes

לא lo
no; also not

נעים מאוד naim meod
nice to meet you

ברוך הבא barukh ha-ba
welcome *(to a woman: brukha ha-baa)*

אני לא מבין ani lo mevin
I don't understand *(a woman: mevina)*

אין בעיה ein beaya
no problem

בהצלחה behatslakha
good luck

שבת שלום shabat shalom
said on Friday and Saturday: have a good weekend

Question words

מה ma
what

מי mi
who

איפה eifo
where

לאן lean
where to

מאיפה me-eifo
where from

מתי matai
when

למה lama
why

איך eikh
how

כמה kama
how much, how many

איזה eize
which *(for a feminine word: eizo)*

Little words

ו ve
and *(it joins the next word:* ואתה ve-ata, *and you)*

או o
or

אבל aval
but

גם gam
also, too

עם im
with

בלי bli
without

פה po
here

שם sham
there

עכשיו akhshav
now

מאוד meod
very *(after the word)*

קצת ktsat
a little

הרבה harbe
a lot

כי ki
because

יש / אין yesh / ein
there is, I have / there isn't

זה / זאת ze / zot
this *(for a masculine / feminine word)*

Family

אבא aba
dad

אמא ima
mum

הורים horim
parents

אח akh
brother

אחות akhot
sister

בן ben
son

בת bat
daughter

סבא saba
grandpa

סבתא savta
grandma

בעל baal
husband

משפחה mishpakha
family

ילדים yeladim
children, kids

Numbers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
אחת	שתיים	שלוש	ארבע	חמש	שש	שבע	שמונה	תשע	עשר
akhat	shtaim	shalosh	arba	khamesh	shesh	sheva	shmone	tesha	eser

Counting: these are the forms for counting, prices and the time. With a masculine word, a few change: אחד ekhad, one. Numbers in digits run left to right, even inside Hebrew text.

Food, places, verbs אוכל ומקומות

Verbs: here in the present, as a man says it: אני אוהב ani ohev, I love. A woman says אני אוהבת ani ohevet; her form is in brackets.

People

איש ish
man

אישה isha
woman; also wife

ילד / ילדה yeled / yalda
boy / girl

חבר / חברה khaver / khavera
friend *(a man / a woman)*; also boyfriend / girlfriend

מורה more
teacher *(a woman: mora)*

רופא rofe
doctor *(a woman: rofa)*

Food and drink

מים mayim
water

קפה kafe
coffee

תה te
tea

חלב khalav
milk

לחם lekhem
bread

חומוס khumus
hummus

פלאפל falafel
falafel

סלט salat
salad

ביצה beitsa
egg

גבינה gvina
cheese

עוף of
chicken

בשר basar
meat

דג dag
fish

ירקות yerakot
vegetables

פירות perot
fruit

ארוחת בוקר arukhat boker
breakfast

טעים taim
tasty

רעב raev
hungry *(a woman: reeva)*

החשבון, בבקשה ha-kheshbon, bevakasha
the bill, please

Places

בית bayit
house, home

בית ספר beit sefer
school

עבודה avoda
work

מסעדה misada
restaurant

בית קפה beit kafe
café

שוק shuk
market

בית חולים beit kholim
hospital

מלון malon
hotel

שדה תעופה sde teufa
airport

רחוב rekhov
street

ים yam
sea

חוף khof
beach

שירותים sherutim
toilet

Verbs

אוהב ohev
love, like *(a woman: ohevet)*

רוצה rotse
want *(rotsa)*

יודע yodea
know *(yodaat)*

מבין mevin
understand *(mevina)*

אוכל okhel
eat *(okhelet)*; also food

שותה shote
drink *(shota)*

הולך holekh
go, walk *(holekhet)*

בא ba
come *(baa)*

עושה ose
do, make *(osa)*

אומר omer
say *(omeret)*

מדבר medaber
speak *(medaberet)*

רואה roe
see *(roa)*

שומע shomea
hear *(shomaat)*

עובד oved
work *(ovedet)*

גר gar
live in a place *(gara)*

קונה kone
buy *(kona)*

לומד lomed
learn, study *(lomedet)*

כותב kotev
write *(kotevet)*

קורא kore
read; also call *(koret)*

יכול yakhol
can *(yekhola)*

צריך tsarikh
need, have to *(tsrikha)*

Describing words

קטן / גדול gadol / katan
big / small

ישן / חדש khadash / yashan
new / old

קר / חם kham / kar
hot / cold

קל / קשה kal / kashe
easy / hard

רחוק / קרוב karov / rakhok
near / far

רע / טוב tov / ra
good / bad

יפה yafe
beautiful, nice

שמח sameakh
happy

עצוב atsuv
sad

עייף ayef
tired

עסוק asuk
busy

For a woman, add -a: גדול gadol, גדולה gdola, big; קטן katan, קטנה ktana, small. Describing words do the same after a feminine word: עיר יפה ir yafa, a beautiful city.

Show words מילים מהסדרות

Reactions

יאללה yalla!
come on! let's go!

סבבה sababa
cool, OK, fine by me

אחלה akhla
great! awesome!

וואלה walla
really? wow; or I swear

באמת? beemet?
really? seriously?

די! dai!
enough! stop it!

נו! nu!
come on! well? *(when someone is slow)*

בסדר beseder
OK, fine, all right

יופי yofi
great! lovely! *(it means beauty)*

אין מצב ein matsav!
no way!

מה פתאום? ma pitom?
what? of course not!

חבל khaval
what a shame, too bad

ברור barur
sure! obviously

תכלס takhles
basically, let's be real

What to call people

מאמי mami
sweetie, babe: to a partner, and friends say it too

אחי akhi
bro, man *(it means my brother)*

אחותי akhoti
sis *(it means my sister)*

חבר khaver
mate, buddy *(it means friend)*

מותק motek
sweetie, honey *(it means sweetness)*

גבר gever
you're the man! *(it means man)*

חמודה / חמוד khamud / khamuda
cutie, sweet *(a man / a woman)*

The big scenes

אני אוהב אותך ani ohev otakh
I love you *(a man to a woman)*

מה קרה? ma kara?
what happened?

הצילו! hatsilu!
help!

זהירות! zehirut!
careful! watch out!

בוא! bo!
come here! *(to a woman: boi!)*

אל תדאג al tidag
don't worry *(to a woman: al tidagi)*

אני מצטער ani mitstaer
I'm sorry *(a woman: mitstaeret)*

Fast and casual: spoken Hebrew in shows is quick and full of slang, and the subtitles often tidy it up. Some slang comes from Arabic, like יאללה yalla and אחלה akhla, and some from English, like ביי bye.

Man or woman: what you say to someone changes for a man or a woman: בוא bo to a man, בואי boi to a woman, both come here. You'll hear the difference in every scene.

Swear words are strong: Hebrew has strong swear words, and you'll hear plenty in arguments on screen. Learn to recognise them, but don't say them. די! dai! and נו! nu! are the ones you can say in front of anyone.

Practice תרגול

How: cover the romanization and the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Hebrew out loud, from right to left, then slide the paper down to check. Can you read every line without peeking? You've got it.

Find the words you know: there are no vowel marks, so start with the words you know: אני ani, בבקשה bevakasha, and ה on the front of a word. The rest of the line falls into place around them.

Read these sentences

1. שלום, אני דנה.
   shalom, ani dana.
   Hello, I'm Dana.

2. איך קוראים לך?
   eikh korim lekha?
   What's your name? (to a woman: lakh)

3. אני מלונדון.
   ani mi-london.
   I'm from London.

4. איפה השירותים?
   eifo ha-sherutim?
   Where's the toilet?

5. כמה זה עולה?
   kama ze ole?
   How much is this?

6. אפשר קפה, בבקשה?
   efshar kafe, bevakasha?
   Can I have a coffee, please?

7. האוכל טעים מאוד!
   ha-okhel taim meod!
   The food is really tasty!

8. חם היום.
   kham ha-yom.
   It's hot today.

9. מחר אני הולך לים.
   makhar ani holekh la-yam.
   Tomorrow I'm going to the sea. (a woman: holekhet)

10. אני מדבר קצת עברית.
    ani medaber ktsat ivrit.
    I speak a little Hebrew. (a woman: medaberet)

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in Hebrew subtitles to see what it means.