

The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

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Welcome to **al-Balagha.com**,
the Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric.
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Arabic Rhetoric (known in Arabic as *al-balāgha*) is the branch of the [Arabic language](#) which is related to the art and science of conveying a message with greater beauty, impact and persuasiveness.

Arabic Rhetoric is as ancient as the Arabic language itself, and is used extensively in both classical and modern Arabic poetry and prose.

In practical terms, **Arabic Rhetoric** is the intelligent use of word order, figurative speech and linguistic embellishments to deliver your message with greater impact.

- More about [Arabic Rhetoric](#)

The **Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric** brings together everything about Arabic Rhetoric in one place.

- More about the [Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Books about Arabic Rhetoric](#)
- [Glossary of Terms](#) related to Arabic Rhetoric



Arabic Rhetorical Devices

Arabic Rhetoric contains a large number of [rhetorical devices](#) which are used to create a rhetorical effect. This site lists [95 of the most common ones](#). They are traditionally grouped into three categories:

- A) Rhetorical devices related to [Sentence Construction & Syntactical Stylistics \('ilm al-ma'ānī\)](#)
- B) Rhetorical devices related to [Figurative Speech \('ilm al-bayān\)](#)
- C) Rhetorical devices related to [Linguistic Embellishments \('ilm al-badī'\)](#)

Additionally, there is a category of literary features which reduce the rhetoric qualities of a text:

- D) Rhetorical devices related to [Negative Rhetorical Effects](#)

A) Sentence Construction & Syntactical Stylistics ('ilm al-ma'ānī)

The crafting of sentences with purposeful departure from what is syntactically or contextually expected (*ikhṛāj al-kalām 'alā khilāf muqaddā al-zāhir*) to achieve rhetorical effect, emphasis, or nuance.

	Name of rhetorical device	
A-1	Reporting/Informing Sentence-Type Switch <i>zahar jumlat khabariyya fi makan muqaddā lijumlat 'insha'iyya wa 'aksih</i>	
A-2	Affirmation <i>al-ta'kid</i>	
A-3	The Imperative <i>al-'amr</i>	
A-4	Prohibition <i>al-nahī</i>	
A-5	The Interrogative <i>al-istihām</i>	
A-6	Wish <i>al-tamannā</i>	
A-7	The Vocative <i>al-nida'</i>	
A-8	Definiteness and Indefiniteness <i>al-ta'arīf wa al-tankīr</i>	
A-9	Use of Pronoun in Place of Noun <i>al-'idmār muqām al-'izhār</i>	
A-10	Use of Noun in Place of Pronoun <i>al-'izhār muqām al-'idmār</i>	
A-11	Conjunction and Disjunction <i>al-waṣāl wa al-faṣāl</i>	
A-12	Foregrounding and Backgrounding <i>al-taqdīm wa al-ta'khīr</i>	
A-13	Brevity, Verbosity and Moderation <i>al-'ījāz wa al-'ijnāb wa al-musāwāa</i>	
A-14	Ellipsis <i>al-dhikr wa al-hadhaf</i>	

B) Figurative Speech ('ilm al-bayān)

The use of imaginative and indirect language to enhance meaning and evoke vivid imagery.

	Name of rhetorical device	
B-1	Simile <i>al-tashbīh</i>	
B-2	Metaphor <i>al-isti'āra</i>	
B-3	Figurative Analogy <i>al-tamthīl</i>	
B-4	Allegory <i>al-majāz</i>	
B-5	Implicit Reference <i>al-kināya</i>	
B-6	Hinting <i>al-ta'riḍ</i>	
B-7	Pun <i>al-hawriya</i>	

C) Linguistic Embellishments ('ilm al-badī')

The strategic use of lexical, phonetic, and structural techniques to beautify expression, intensify meaning, and create aesthetic harmony within the text.

(A) Wordplay & Phonetic Styling

Aesthetic choices in wording and sound that enhance memorability, rhythm, or layered meaning.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CA-1	Paronomasia <i>al-jinās / al-tajnīs</i>	
CA-2	Alliteration <i>al-mujānisa al-istihlākiyya</i>	
CA-3	Onomatopoeia <i>al-muhākāa al-ṣawtiyya</i>	

(B) Contrasts & Inversions

Rhetorical devices that highlight meaning through opposites, reversals, and mirrored structures.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CB-1	Antithesis <i>al-ṭibāq</i>	
CB-2	Colour Contrast <i>al-tadbīj</i>	
CB-3	Oxymoron <i>al-'irdāf al-khālīf / ijtimā' lafzātayn mutanāqidatayn</i>	
CB-4	Palindrome <i>al-qalb / mā lā yastahīl bi al-'n'kās</i>	
CB-5	Reversal of Word Order <i>al-in'ikās al-tarkībī</i>	

(C) Repetition & Reinforcement

The strategic reuse of words or phrases to emphasize, intensify, or create rhythm.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CC-1	Repetition <i>al-takrār</i>	
CC-2	Repetition With Varied Phrasing <i>al-takrār bi'barāt mukhtalifa</i>	

(D) Indirectness & Ambiguity

Rhetorical strategies that obscure, soften, or shift meaning to invite interpretation or avoid directness.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CD-1	Deliberate Ambiguity <i>al-ṭihām</i>	
CD-2	Evasive Response <i>'uslūb al-ḥakīm</i>	
CD-3	Evasive Letterplay <i>al-mawāraḃa</i>	
CD-4	Euphemism <i>al-tahwīn</i>	
CD-5	Referential Shift <i>al-istikhdām</i>	

(E) Grouping & Distinguishing

Logical and stylistic techniques that organize, compare, or contrast elements within a sentence or passage.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CE-1	Unifying Expression <i>al-'ibārā al-jāmi'a</i>	
CE-2	Syntactic Grouping <i>al-jam'</i>	
CE-3	Semantic Grouping <i>marā'āat al-naẓīr</i>	
CE-4	Dividing Items <i>al-taqsīm</i>	
CE-5	Grouping Then Dividing <i>al-jam' ma'a al-taqsīm</i>	
CE-6	Grouping Then Differentiating <i>al-jam' ma'a al-tafriq</i>	
CE-7	Differentiating Between Similar Items <i>al-tafriq</i>	
CE-8	Folding and Unfolding <i>al-fay wa al-nashar / al-laff wa al-nashar</i>	

(F) Paragraph Structure & Flow

Devices that shape the structure, transitions, and aesthetic impact of a passage from beginning to end.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CF-1	Pleasantness of the Opening <i>ḥusn al-ibtida'</i>	
CF-2	Finesse of Initiation <i>barā'at al-istihlāl</i>	
CF-3	Similarities of the Start & Finish <i>tashābah al-'aṭraf</i>	
CF-4	Parallelism <i>al-mawāzana / muqābala bi al-lafz</i>	
CF-5	Digression <i>al-istiṭirāḍ</i>	
CF-6	Rhetorical Branching <i>al-tafīr</i>	
CF-7	Change of Topic <i>ḥusn al-takhalus</i>	
CF-8	Forewarning <i>al-'irṣād / al-tashīm</i>	
CF-9	Anticipatory Closure <i>al-'irṣād</i>	
CF-10	Pleasantness of the Ending <i>ḥusn al-intihā'</i>	
CF-11	Finesse of the Ending <i>barā'at al-maqā'a</i>	

(G) Argumentation & Illustrative Persuasion

Techniques that strengthen reasoning through vivid imagery, layered references, and strategic shifts in style or genre.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CG-1	Rhetorical Shift <i>al-iltifāt</i>	
CG-2	Scholastic Approach <i>al-madhab al-kalāmī</i>	
CG-3	Genre Shifting <i>al-iftinān</i>	
CG-4	Quotation & Poetic Incorporation <i>al-iqtibās wa al-taḍmīn</i>	
CG-5	Incorporation of Proverbs <i>'irṣāl al-mathal / al-kalām al-jāma'</i>	
CG-6	Hinting at the Source <i>al-talmīḥ</i>	
CG-7	Integration of Imagery <i>al-'idmāj</i>	
CG-8	Stacked-up Descriptions <i>al-istitbā'</i>	
CG-9	Abstraction <i>al-tajrīḍ</i>	
CG-10	Meaningful Proper Nouns <i>al-tawjīḥ</i>	

(H) Persuasive Tricks

Expressive techniques that persuade through exaggeration, irony, reversal, or emotional manipulation.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CH-1	Hyperbole <i>al-mubālagha</i>	
CH-2	Fanciful Causation <i>ḥusn al-ta'tīl</i>	
CH-3	Rhetorical Concession <i>al-taslīm al-khiṭābī</i>	
CH-4	Affirmed Praise <i>ta'kid al-madaḥ bimā yushbah al-dham</i>	
CH-5	Affirmed Dispraise <i>ta'kid al-dham bimā yushbah al-madaḥ</i>	
CH-6	Affirmation by Negation <i>al-'ithbāt bilnaḥī</i>	
CH-7	Praise-Blame Dichotomy <i>al-mughāyara</i>	
CH-8	Feigned Ignorance <i>tajāhul al-'arīf</i>	
CH-9	Diminishing Expression <i>al-tahqīr</i>	
CH-10	Addressing the Non-Human <i>mukhāṭabat ghayr al-'aḳal</i>	
CH-11	Personification <i>al-tashkhiṣ / al-tajṣīd</i>	
CH-12	Sarcasm <i>al-istiḥzā'</i>	
CH-13	Humour Through Which Seriousness is Intended <i>al-hazl yurād bihi al-jidd</i>	
CH-14	Retraction <i>al-rujū'</i>	
CH-15	Finesse of Requesting <i>birā'a al-falāḃ</i>	

(I) Sound Aesthetics

Expressive techniques that persuade through exaggeration, irony, reversal, or emotional manipulation.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CI-1	Assonance <i>al-ṣaj'</i>	
CI-2	Concordance of Word and Meaning <i>'itlāf al-lafz wa al-ma'anā</i>	
CI-3	Concordance of Pronunciations <i>'itlāf al-lafz ma'a al-lafz</i>	

(J) Rhythmic Structuring & Balance

Expressive techniques that persuade through exaggeration, irony, reversal, or emotional manipulation.

	Name of rhetorical device	
CJ-1	Tail-Head <i>rad al-'ajāz 'alā al-ṣadar / al-taṣḍīr</i>	
CJ-2	Head-Tail <i>rad al-ṣadar 'alā al-'ajāz</i>	
CJ-3	Excellence of Division <i>ḥusn al-taqsīm</i>	
CJ-4	Metrical Ellipsis <i>al-tashīr</i>	
CJ-5	Proportioning <i>al-'izdawāj</i>	
CJ-6	Hemistich Ending Concordance <i>al-tarṣī' / al-murādīf</i>	

D) Negative Rhetorical Effects

Stylistic and linguistic flaws that reduce the eloquence, clarity, or aesthetic impact of an utterance, and which are traditionally viewed as detracting from rhetorical excellence.

	English name	
D-1	Loanwords <i>al-kalimāt al-musta'ārah</i>	
D-2	Catachresis <i>sū' al-isti' māl al-lughawī</i>	
D-3	Linguistic Errors <i>al-akhta' al-lughawiyyah</i>	

	English name	
D-4	Phonetic Incongruity <i>al-tanāquḍ' al-ṣawī'</i>	
D-5	Unfamiliar Usage <i>istikhdām ghayr ma'lūf</i>	
D-6	Use of Inappropriate Linguistic Style and Register <i>istikhdām al-'uslūb ghair al-munāsib</i>	

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