

Syrian Arabic politeness formulae and responses

Arabic has a highly developed system of formulaic polite phrases for different situations, and most phrases have a specific response. Knowing these phrases, in what situations they are used, and how to properly respond to them, is an important part of oral language proficiency in Arabic. I have not seen a comprehensive list of such phrases[^{steward}] and thought I'd set out to make one.

The phrases below are given in EALL transliteration as pronounced in Syrian Arabic. They are given very literal translations. Most of them have no equivalent in English anyway. Each phrase is followed by its appropriate response. Forward slash indicates alternative responses.

Greetings

Formal greeting.

The pronoun *-kum* (3mpl) is invariable in this phrase and its response. The extension of the reply in brackets is recommended in a *ḥadīth*.

as- wa-
salām *ʿalaykum*
ʿalaykum *salām*
[*wa-*
raḥmat
al-
lāh
wa-
barakātuh]

Peace And
 be upon
 upon you
 you. peace
 [and
 God's
 greace
 and
 his
 blesings].

- Informal greeting.

|:-|:-| | *marḥaban* | *ahlan/marḥabatēn* | | Hello | Hi/Two *marḥabans* |

- Greeting - before noon.

ṣabāḥ al-xēr | *ṣabāḥ an-nūr/al-full* |
 Morning of goodness | Morning of light/rose |

- Greeting - after noon.

masāʾ al-xēr | *masāʾ an-nūr* |
 Evening of goodness | Evening of light |

- Welcoming. Also general filler of pauses in polite conversation.

ahlan wa-sahlan | *ahlan fīk* |
 On flat ground and as family | On falt ground for you as well |

Goodbyes

- When parting.

maʿa salāma | *allāh maʿak* |
 With peace. | May God be with you. |

- Before parting and saying goodbye (Syria).

biddak šī? | *salāmtak* |
 Do you want something? | Your wellbeing |

- When parting before sleep.

tuṣbiḥ ʿalā xēr | *wa-inta bi-xēr/min ahl al-xēr* |
 Wake up in good health | And you are well/of the good people |

Phrases for specific occasions

- To someone has recently cut their hair,shaved, or had a shower or bath.

na^cīman | *allāh yan^cam ^calek/^caleki* |
Gracefully. | May God bestow grace upon you. |

- To someone in grief.

al-^cawāḍ bi-salāmtak | ** |
May the compensation be in your health | |

- To someone returning from prayer (*ṣalāt*).

taqabbal allāh | *minni u-minnak* |
May God accept [your prayer] | From me and from you |

- Asking someone to calm down.

ṣalli ^ca-n-nabi | *allah yuṣalli ^ca-n-nabi* |
Pray for the Prophet | May God pray for the Prophet |

- To someone returning from a journey.

al-ḥamdu li-llāh ^cala s-salāma | *allah yusallimak* |
God be praised for your wellbeing | May God preserve you |

- Asking someone to pass a greeting.

sallim ^cala X | *allah yusallimak/byūṣal* |
Greet X | May God preserve you/It will arrive |

- Guest after finishing food. (*Dāyīman* as a wish for the host always to have food.)

dāyīman | *ṣaḥḥa* |
Always | [I wish you] Health |

- To someone who is eating/drinking.

ṣaḥḥa/ṣaḥḥatēn | *^cala ^ʔalbak* |
Health/Two healths | On your heart |

- To someone who has purchased something.

mabrūk | *allāh yubārīk fīk* |
Blessed | May God bless you |

- After being introduced to someone.

tašarrafna | *yazīdak aš-šaraf* |
We are honored | May he increase your honor |

- To someone returning from the toilet. (I was told about this phrase but have never actually heard it in use. People seem to be aware of it, however, since I have used it jokingly with some measure of success. The pronoun is invariable.

šufītum | *^ʔufītum* |
May you have been healed. | May you have been ... |