

# Syrian Arabic politeness formulae and responses

## A Contrastive Approach to the Analysis of Politeness Formulas

Root-echo responses in Syrian Arabic politeness formulas. CA Ferguson - Linguistic studies in me

Root-Echo Responses in Egyptian Arabic Politeness Formulae. Devin Stweart. Understanding Arabic

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[<sup>steward</sup>] and thought I'd set out to make one.

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

## Greetings

### General greeting

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*as- wa-  
salām<sup>al</sup>alaykum  
alayk<sup>salām</sup>  
[wa-  
rahmatu  
al-  
lāhi  
wa-  
barakātuh]*

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

---

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

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<i>marḥaban</i>	<i>ahlan/marḥabatēn/mīt marḥaba</i>
Hello	Hi/Two <i>marḥabas</i> /a hunderd <i>marḥabas</i>

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### Greeting before noon

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<i>ṣabāḥ al-xēr</i>	<i>ṣabāḥ an-nūr/ṣabāḥ al-full</i>
Morning of good	Morning of light/Morning of rose

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*Xēr* does not easily lend itself to translation. The standard Arabic-English lexicon (Wehr) gives “good thing, blessing; wealth, property; — good, benefit, interest, advantage; welfare; charity.”

### Greeting after noon

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<i>masāʾ al-xēr</i>	<i>masāʾ an-nūr</i>
Evening of good	Evening of light

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### Welcoming

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<i>ahlan wa-sahlan</i>	<i>ahlan fīk</i>
On flat ground and as family	On flat ground to you

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Also general filler in pauses in polite conversation. The literal meaning given here is completely lost.

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<i>nawwartu</i>	<i>bi-wujūdکم</i>
You have enlightened	In your presence

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### When being introduced to someone

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<i>tašarrafna</i>	<i>yazīdak aš-šaraf</i>
We are honored	May he increase your honor

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## Parting

### General good byes

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<i>ma<sup>ʿ</sup>a salāma</i>	<i>allāh ma<sup>ʿ</sup>ak</i>
With peace	May God be with you

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<i>ilā liqā</i>	<i>allāh ma<sup>ʿ</sup>ak</i>
until [our nex] meeting	May God be with you

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<i>biddak šī?</i>	<i>salāmtak</i>
Do you want something?	Your wellbeing

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### Parting before sleep

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<i>tuṣbiḥ <sup>ʿ</sup>alā xēr</i>	<i>wa-inta bi-xēr/min ahl al-xēr</i>
Wake up in good health	And you are well/of the good people

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## Phrases for special occasions

### To someone in grief (at funeral (*ʿazā*))

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<i>al-<sup>ʿ</sup>iwād bi-salāmtak</i>	<i>allah yusallimak</i>
May the compensation be in your health	May God give you health

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or

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<i>al-<sup>c</sup>umr illak</i>	<i>t<sup>c</sup>iš</i>
The lifetime to you	May you live

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**To newlyweds (at wedding)**

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<i>mbāarak mā <sup>c</sup>amiltu</i>	<i>allah yubārik fik</i>
Blessed that which you have done	May God bless you

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**To someone departing on a journey**

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<i>trūh u-tarja<sup>3</sup> bi-s-salāma</i>	<i>allah yusallimak</i>
Leave and return in peace	May God preserve you

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**To someone returning from a journey**

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<i>al-ḥamdu li-llāh <sup>c</sup>ala s-salāma</i>	<i>*allah yusallimak</i>
God be praised for your wellbeing	May God preserve you

---

**Parting from someone you have met for the first time**

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<i>furṣa sa<sup>c</sup>īda</i>	<i>u-ana as<sup>c</sup>ad</i>
Happy occasion	And I am happier

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**Phrases for not so special occasions**

**To someone who has recently cut their hair, shaved, or have had a shower or bath**

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<i>na<sup>c</sup>īman</i>	<i>allah yin<sup>c</sup>am <sup>c</sup>alēk</i>
Gracefully	May God bestow grace upon you.

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**To someone who has performed the prayer (*ṣalāt*)**

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<i>taqabbal allāh</i>	<i>minni u-minnak</i>
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May God accept [your prayer]    From me and from you

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**Asking someone to be patient/calm down**

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<i>şalli ʿa-n-nabi</i>	<i>allah yuşalli ʿa-n-nabi</i>
Pray for the Prophet	May God pray for the Prophet

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**Asking someone to pass a greeting**

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<i>sallim ʿala X</i>	<i>allah yusallimak/byūşal/şār ʿindu</i>
Greet X	May God preserve you/It will arrive/It is with him

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**Guest after finishing meal**

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<i>dāyima</i>	<i>şaḥḥa/</i>
Always	[I wish you] Health

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*Dāyima* as a wish for the host always to have food.

or

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<i>inşalla bi-l-afrāḥ</i>	???
God willing on the wedding	

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**To someone who is eating, drinking or sneezing**

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<i>şaḥḥa/şaḥḥatēn</i>	<i>ʿala ʿalbak</i>
Health/Two healths	On your heart

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**To someone who has purchased something**

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<i>mabrūk</i>	<i>allāh yubārik fīk</i>
Blessed	May God bless you

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**To someone returning from the restroom**

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<i>šufitum</i>	<i>ʔufitum</i>
May you have been healed.	May you have been ...

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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.

**To someone who is sick or injured**

<i>salamtak</i>	<i>allah yusallimak</i>
Your health	May God bring bring you health

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