

Practice in Determining Roots

1

نكتب

What is this word's root? Choose from the options below:

ك ت ب

ن ك ت ب

ن ك ب

ك ب ب

none of the above

This should be an easy one if you've learned the imperfect verb conjugations. The first letter is the 1st-person plural prefix *ن* *we*. The root is then the three remaining consonants: *ك ت ب*. It is, in theory, possible that might be a measure VIII geminate verb with a root *ك ب ب*, but such a verb does not exist. It could also, theoretically, be a quadrilateral verb (with four radicals), but this verb also does not exist. But, as you can see, if you are dealing with a word you do not know, as is likely the case if you need to look it up in the dictionary, it is not always so obvious which consonants make up the root. In short, you may need to look up the word in more than one place in the dictionary before you find it. Start with the *most likely* root, based on your previous knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and certainly from the context of the sentence.

2

نمت

What is this word's root? Choose from the options below:

ن و م

م و ت

ن م ي

ن م م

none of the above

This one is tricky because it can be three different words, with three meanings and different pronunciations but identical spelling. Oh, and three different roots, as well!

You may have interpreted it as *I slept* (or *you slept*), in which case you probably already know that it is a hollow verb (the second radical becoming a vowel). The second radical of a hollow verb can be either و or ي. It isn't always clear which, but it's more or less a moot point, because ي immediately follows و in the dictionary. So, if you look up م ي ن and can't find anything, just look for م و ن, if not on the same page, then on the immediately preceding pages.

But this may also be a defective verb, the base form of which is نما *develop*. The form نمت is the feminine third-person singular in the perfect (past) tense. Again, you don't really have to know whether the third radical is و or ي, as the word will be listed in the same part of the dictionary either way. By the way, it could just as likely be the measure II verb نَمَّى *develop*, which would also take the form نمت.

The hollow verb مات *die* has the root م و ت. The first-person plural form of the indicative is نموت *we die*, but the long vowel is shortened in the jussive, resulting in نمُتْ. In this case, it will likely be preceded by لم, which precedes jussive verbs. So, again, context will be a great help in determining the root of a word.

Finally, there is a geminate verb نمَّ *reveal*. نَمَّتْ *it (f.) revealed*.

3

التحق

What is this word's root? Choose from the options below:

ل ح ق

ت ح ق

ح ق ق

ل ت ح ق

none of the above

In determining the root of a word, you want to be careful not to mistake a prefix as part of the root. The most common prefix is the definite article ال. Fortunately, it's rather easy to identify. If you decide this is a noun with the definite article and look up ت ح ق, you won't find an entry. What next? Consider that it may not be the definite article at all. There are a few words which happen to begin with the same letters. التحق may look like a noun with the definite article, but it is actually a measure VIII verb, meaning it begins with ا and inserts ت after the first radical. So, the root is ل ح ق.

4

ألمانيا

What is this word's root? Choose from the options below:

م ن ي

ل م ن

م و ن

ء ل م

none of the above

The answer is *none of the above*. This is a foreign word, the name of a country, *Germany*. It is not based on the Arabic root system, and as such, you can look it up alphabetically, letter by letter, in the dictionary. Ambiguity can also arise because not all Arabs are careful and correct with writing hamza, so you may see a word that should begin with أ (with a hamza on the alef) spelled ا (without the hamza), making it look like the definite article. In ألمانيا *Germany*, often incorrectly written المانيا, the first two letters are part of the name, and not the definite article.

Remember that the *Lingualism Arabic Learner's Dictionary* has an index of *Difficult to Find Roots* in the back of the book. This index contains words which are geminate or contain و, ي, or ء as one of the roots.

