

Islamic Phrases - First Steps

English Transliteration pronunciation hints:

In English transliteration of Arabic words, the vowels that you see written should be pronounced like this. There are three short vowels, three long vowels, and two combined vowel sounds (diphthongs).

Short vowels:

- a** = like the “uh” in “hum”. Example: *alhamdu* should be pronounced “uhl – hum – do”.
- i** = like the “i” in “itch”. Example: *ih-di*.
- u** = like the “oo” in “boo”, make sure to not stretch (lengthen) the sound. Example: *alhamdu* above.

Long vowels:

- â or aa** = like the “a” in “fall”, but stretch the sound twice as long, as if you were dragging out the pronunciation of “faaaall”. Example: *qaala Allaahu* = “qaaa – luh - uhl - laaa - who”
- î or ee** = like the “ee” in “beet”, again stretching the sound. Example: *qeela*.
- û or oo** = like the “oo” in “boo”, but stretching out the sound. Example: *muslimoon*.

Vowel combinations:

- ay or ai** = close to the “ay” in “ray”, but with the “a” pronounced gently: closer to “uh” as above. Example: *bayna*.
- aw or au** = close to the “ou” in “south”, pronounced gently. Example: *law-hin*.

Common Phrases Used by Muslims - Part 1

Phrase	Meaning	When it is used	Arabic Script
Bismillaah (short version)	With the name of Allah	Whenever starting to do something; especially at the beginning of a meal, entering the house or the mosque, etc. There is a longer version of this that is recited at the beginning of every chapter of the Qur’an.	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ
As-salaamu-‘alaykum	Peace be upon you.	Greeting another Muslim	السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ
Wa-‘alaykumus-salaam	And upon you be peace.	Responding to another Muslim who greets you as above	وَعَلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامُ
In-shaa-Allaah	If Allah wills	Whenever you say that you plan to do something in the close or far future, we say this to remind ourselves that the actual ability to achieve or do anything is in Allah’s control	إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ
Subhaanallaah	Glory be to Allah	Exclamation in response to something good or amazing - recognizing Allah’s greatness	سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ
Al-hamdu-lillaah	All praise is due to Allah.	Used in any situation to express satisfaction and/or gratitude to Allah. Commonly said after finishing eating, or in response to “How are you?”	الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ
Laa ilaaha illal-laah	There is none worthy of worship except Allah.	This is the primary statement of faith of a Muslim.	لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
Allaahu akbar	Allah is most great.	Used in prayers and as a general declaration of faith or thanksgiving. Reminds ourselves of Allah’s vastness and power. (Has nothing to do with violence.)	اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

The last four phrases above form a popular set of formulas for *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah that a Muslim can recite silently or aloud to inculcate the consciousness and awareness of Allah in their lives at all times.