



**TRANSLATORS**  
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### **Arabic Style Guide**

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We've prepared this style guide as a tool for translators working on TWB projects in **Arabic**.

It describes certain principles that we expect our translators to use when they translate content into or from Arabic.

The [Translation Quality section](#) of our forum also contains important material about TWB Quality Strategy and Error typology.

If you have any comments or questions about this style guide or about a specific translation task, please contact your project officer. You can also leave a message in our [Kató Community forum](#) for your fellow translators or our staff to see. Here's a great [Welcome Pack](#) to get you started on how to use the forum!

***Note: The examples in this guide are for reference only. Please, use your own writing style. The intention is to convey the meaning of the source text correctly and in such a way that the audience can easily understand the message.***



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## The Five Quality Categories at TWB

The five quality categories are:

- Accuracy
- Fluency
- Terminology
- Style
- Design

### Accuracy

Translate the source document accurately, without adding or removing any information.

- Avoid over-translation or under-translation.
- Convey the meaning clearly to the target audience using words that are familiar to them. Avoid jargon when unnecessary.
- For the sake of making the meaning clearer, you may use group of words or a phrase to describe a single word that may not be readily understood by the target audience. You can also add the source word as it is between brackets after translating it if. See “Style” for more instructions regarding this.

Examples		
Source	One-word translation	Possible phrase translation
Privatization	خصخصة	التحويل إلى القطاع الخاص
Scheduling	جدولة	إعداد الجداول

### Fluency

Follow the target language norms and conventions so you create a target document that flows in a natural way.

- Translate the meaning of the text clearly and concisely, using terms that target readers will understand. (Example: Translate “incorrect” as: “خاطئ” rather than “غير صحيح”.)
- The translation shouldn’t be just a word-for-word translation. It should convey the meaning of the sentence.
- Use the common writing style of Arabic to make the translation sound natural, while maintaining what is culturally appropriate and substituting words/phrases that do not convey the intended meaning in the target language.

Examples		
Source	Avoid	Use
Dry mouth	نقص اللعاب	جفاف الفم
Breastfeeding	رضاعة ثديية	رضاعة طبيعية



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## Spelling

- Always use the hamza where it should be used. Avoid adding a hamza where it is not needed and vice versa.

Examples	
Avoid	Use
إجتهد	اجتهاد
احمد	أحمد

- There are several ways used for writing hamza in certain words. Both are acceptable as long as consistency is maintained. Translators should keep the target audience in mind and avoid projecting their experience on the text. When the text is clearly directed at an audience that is known to be familiar with one use of hamza over the other, the target audience preference should prevail.

Examples		
Source	Egyptian audience	Levantine audience
Responsibility	مسئولية	مسؤولية
Responsible	شئون	شؤون

## Punctuation

- Avoid leaving extra spaces before punctuation marks.
- Avoid separating “و” with a space when used as a conjunction.
- Avoid imitating the punctuation system of English in Arabic as is or. The same applies when translating from Arabic into English.

Examples		
Source	Avoid	Use
There are many useful reasons. Such as the following:	يوجد العديد من الأسباب. مثل ما يلي:	يوجد العديد من الأسباب، مثل ما يلي: Or يوجد العديد من الأسباب والتي تشمل ما يلي:
تشمل الأطعمة المتوفرة الدجاج والسّمك والخضار والفواكه.	Available food includes chicken and fish and vegetables and fruit.	Available food includes: chicken, fish, vegetables, and fruit.



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## Diacritics

- In general, try to use diacritics where you believe they will improve the meaning.
- There are two systems for placing “tanween ً” on the final “alif ا”. Both systems are acceptable as long as consistency is maintained. Furthermore, if the target audience is known to have a preference for one system over the other, that system should be used.
- In general, try to add the “Dhamma ُ” when passive voice is used in the Arabic translation.
- Try to use the “Shadda ّ”. It is highly recommended especially since the use can help avoid ambiguity.

Examples		
Source	Ambiguous	Clear
The student studied	درس الطالب	درّس الطالب
The student taught	درس الطالب	درّس الطالب

## Grammar

- Arabic sentences usually start with the verb rather than the noun. This should be considered and followed as much as possible.
- Arabic passive sentences are formed using passive forms of verbs, as follows:

Examples		
Source	Avoid	Use
The application was rejected	تمت مقابلة الطلب بالرفض	قُوبِل الطلب بالرفض
Aids were granted	تم منح المساعدات	مُنحت المساعدات

- Use the natural Arabic grammar and avoid mimicking the English one.

Examples		
Source	Avoid	Use
The distribution was made by the organization	تم التوزيع من قبل المنظمة Or التوزيع كان بواسطة المنظمة	قامت المنظمة بالتوزيع
Mosquitoes transmit deadly diseases	البعوض ينقل الأمراض المميتة	ينقل البعوض الأمراض المميتة





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## Terminology

Familiarize yourself with any special words, terms, or other units that you need to translate in a particular way. Use those words and terms consistently throughout the target document.

## Glossaries

You may need to use specific glossaries and terminology. This will be automatically displayed in the glossary tab in Kató TM. **Familiarize yourself with the glossary** entries and use them consistently. You can [learn more about the glossary here](#). You can check the Arabic glossary [here](#) and you can view the glossaries contributed by our community [here](#). The KC thread for discussing Arabic glossaries is this [one](#).

## Inconsistencies

Keep your translation consistent and coherent throughout the document. This applies to many aspects, such as terminology or structure, for example. In projects with multiple translators working in parallel, make sure you document and communicate your decisions to your colleagues using the forum thread for the project. It is also a great place to interact with them and ask any questions you may have.

## Style

Write the translation in a style that is linguistically and culturally appropriate for the target audience and which respects the intent of the original.

- Substitute words/phrases that are offensive or unfamiliar to the target audience.
- Always use polite language, such as forms of pronouns and verbs, unless there is a specific reason to do otherwise.
- Avoid slang and informalities, as well as idioms that may not be understood by everyone.
- Some foreign words are more common than their Arabic equivalents. In those cases, it is perfectly acceptable to use such words as they are. In each case, make sure that the translation takes into account the target audience.

Examples		
Source	Possible Translation	Possible Translation
Computer	كمبيوتر	حاسوب
WiFi	الواي فاي	الشبكة المحلية اللاسلكية

- Use the standard translation for brand names, organization names, company names, names of applications (example: Facebook = فيسبوك, Save the Children = أنقذوا الأطفال) and then add the English original between brackets () right after the translation. If a standard translation is not available, do the translation yourself and also add the original English between brackets () after your translation. If the name is untranslatable or the translation would make no sense, use transliteration and then add the English original between brackets () after your



translation. In all cases, add a defining word before your translation or transliteration in Arabic (e.g. منظمة - مبادرة - شركة - مجموعة). Untranslatable names can be blends, puns, coined words, proper nouns, play on words, etc.

Examples		
Source	Standard translation / transliteration	Possible transliteration
Facebook	منظمة فيسبوك	-
Oxfam	منظمة أوكسفام	-
Ashinaga	-	منظمة أشيناغا
Save the Children	-	منظمة أنقذوا الأطفال (Save the Children)

- For acronyms, use standard translations or transliteration, if available. If there is no available official translation or transliteration, use your own translation or transliteration if translation is not possible. When using a transliteration or translation for acronyms, put the English equivalent between brackets and indicate that this is the original, if needed.

Examples		
Source	Standard Translation	Possible Translation
UNICEF	منظمة اليونيسيف	منظمة الأمم المتحدة للطفولة
AIDS	الإيدز	فيروس نقص المناعة البشري المكتسب
SMART goals	-	الأهداف المحددة والقابلة للقياس والتحقيق وذات صلة ومحددة المدة الزمنية. (بالإنكليزية SMART)

### Tone

- Understand the author's feelings, mood and attitude, and reflect that tone in the target document.
- If the document is scientific, the tone will be factual and realistic. Keep this in mind when translating tricky words. For example:

Examples		
Source	Possible Translation	Possible Translation
Covid-19 is an interesting case study	هنالك أمر مسلٍ في دراسة حالة كوفيد-١٩	هنالك ما يثير الاهتمام في دراسة حالة كوفيد-١٩



- In guides, children stories etc. the excitement and enthusiasm must be conveyed if present in the original text. For example:

Examples		
Source	Possible Translation	Possible Translation
Gather in a circle and shout 1-2-3!	تجمعوا في دائرة وقولوا ١-٢-٣.	تجمّعوا في دائرة واصرخوا ١-٢-٣!

### Language Variants

Arabic has many variants, both formal and informal. Formal Arabic is called Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and sometimes called classic Arabic. This is the language used for translation in most of the documents, with variants based on the country the documents target. This is an example:

Maghrebi	Egyptian and Sudanese	Levantine	Gulf	Others
Tunis	Egypt	Syria	KSA	Libya
Morocco	Sudan	Iraq	UAE	Comoros
Algeria		Lebanon	Yemen	
Mauritania		Jordan	Kuwait	

### Intended Audience

- Try to understand the intended audience of the content, and change the style and tone accordingly. You can find this information in the project details, or ask your Project Officer in the Kató Community forum thread.
- Always use the polite forms of pronouns and verbs. This excludes cases where the source text is clearly using a type of language that is intended to address a certain audience informally or in a friendly way.
- Pay attention to when the target audience is clearly one gender can be inferred clearly from the text.

Examples		
Source	Not appropriate	Better
If you find a strange thing on the ground when playing with friends, call for help	في حال تم العثور على جسم غير مألوف أثناء المرح مع الخلان، يجب المسارعة إلى طلب المساعدة	اطلبوا المساعدة إذا عثرتم على شيء غريب على الأرض أثناء لعبكم مع الأصدقاء
You should visit the doctor during the third month of pregnancy.	يجب عليك زيارة الطبيب خلال الشهر الثالث من الحمل.	يجب عليك زيارة الطبيب خلال الشهر الثالث من الحمل
Tests are usually carried out on patients during the first trimester.	تتم عادة إجراء الفحوص على المرضى خلال الأشهر الثلاثة الأولى من الحمل.	تتم عادة إجراء الفحوص على المريضات خلال الأشهر الثلاثة الأولى من حملهن.





- The above source text is taken from a sign meant to warn children against touching foreign objects that may be UODs

## Design

Aspects of the presentation of a translation, such as length, format, conventions applied, etc. There are also special considerations to keep in mind when translating using CAT tools, such as Kató:

- Pay close attention to segmentation when translating on Kató. Arabic sentences are usually longer, while English sentences are shorter. This means that when translating from English into Arabic, not all full stops should be full stops in the Arabic text. Similarly, when translating from Arabic into English, a long sentence is better when broken down into several smaller sentences. Always refer to the source file.
- Avoid copying the tab mark (→) in Kató from the source text. Instead, use the tab button on your keyboard to add the symbol. You can tell if the symbol is copied or added correctly by the color. Dark black means copied and grey means inserted correctly.
- Avoid missing spaces before or after tags when translating in Kató. There is a warning displayed when such an issue occurs. If spaces are missing, words might become connected to each other in the output file.
- Ignore tags that separate the letters of the word itself. Try reading the whole word or checking the document itself when in doubt.

Examples		
Source	Wrong	Correct
The tsunami destroyed half of the village's farms	تسبب التسو في قرية نامي بدمار نصف القرية المزارع	تسبب التسونامي بدمار نصف مزارع الفلاحين
5 <sup>th</sup> December 2017	5 كانون ديسمبر 2017	5 ديسمبر 2017

- Not that in the second, the tags are useless since the function they serve in the original text is not needed in the target text.

## Date and Time format

- Use the dd/mm/yyyy date format. Example: 12/02/2018
- For the expanded date format, use the corresponding format in Arabic.

Examples	
Source	Arabic
December 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2017	الخامس من ديسمبر / كانون الأول 2017
5 <sup>th</sup> December 2017	الخامس من ديسمبر / كانون الأول 2017

- When translating from Arabic into English, convert Hijri dates to Gregorian dates.
- When translating am or pm, spell out the word instead of just using a letter.



- When translating the names of months from English into Arabic, use both names in Arabic.

List of months	
English	Arabic
January	يناير / كانون الثاني
February	فبراير / شباط
March	مارس / آذار
April	أبريل / نيسان
May	مايو / أيار
June	يونيو / حزيران
July	يوليو / تموز
August	أغسطس / آب
September	سبتمبر / أيلول
October	أكتوبر / تشرين الأول
November	نوفمبر / تشرين الثاني
December	ديسمبر / كانون الأول

### Numbers and lists

- When writing numbers, copying and pasting them in Kató will cause them to appear inverted. Make sure that the numbers appear in the correct order.

Examples		
Source	Copied	Typed manually
+1 (49) 555 666 999	999 666 555 (49) 1+	+1 (49) 555 666 999

- When numbering lists manually, make sure you preserve consistency and that you use a unique type of list that corresponds to each of the lists in the source.

الأرقام العربية	الأرقام الهندية	الأرقام الرومانية	اسم الحرف	الألفبائية	الأبجدية	الحروف
1	١	I	ألف	أ	أ	A a
2	٢	II	باء	ب	ب	B b
3	٣	III	تاء	ت	ج	C c
4	٤	IV	ثاء	ث	د	D d
5	٥	V	جيم	ج	هـ	E e
6	٦	VI	حاء	ح	و	F f
7	٧	VII	خاء	خ	ز	G g
8	٨	VIII	دال	د	ح	H h
9	٩	IX	ذال	ذ	ط	I i
10	١٠	X	راي	ر	ي	J j
11	١١	XI	زاي	ز	ك	K k
12	١٢	XII	سين	س	ل	L l



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M m	م	ش	شين	XIII	١٣	13
N n	ن	ص	صاد	XIV	١٤	14
O o	س	ض	ضاد	XV	١٥	15
P p	ع	ط	طاء	XVI	١٦	16
Q q	ف	ظ	ظاء	XVII	١٧	17
R r	ص	ع	عين	XVIII	١٨	18
S s	ق	غ	غين	XIX	١٩	19
T t	ر	ف	فاء	XX	٢٠	20
U u	ش	ق	قاف	XXI	٢١	21
V v	ت	ك	كاف	XXII	٢٢	22
W w	ث	ل	لام	XXIII	٢٣	23
X x	خ	م	ميم	XXIV	٢٤	24
Y y	ذ	ن	نون	XXV	٢٥	25
Z z	ض	هـ	هاء	XXVI	٢٦	26
	ظ	و	واو	XXVII	٢٧	27
	غ	ي	ياء	XXVIII	٢٨	28

- When translating letters used to identify appendices, chapters etc. replace the English letter with its equivalent. You can use a letter or the spelled-out version.

## Domains and Specific Instructions

Translators without Borders and its Partners classify content in **Domains**. Specific recommendations for your language in each of these domains are set out below. If a specific domain is not listed, then please follow the general recommendations.

### Medical Translations

- When translating medical texts, due care should be provided. The translator should keep in mind that this type of text is aimed at saving lives.
- When translating public messages, announcements, signs, etc. use a simple language and avoid using complicated medical terms.

Examples		
Source	Medical	General
AIDS	فيروس نقص المناعة البشري المكتسب	الإيدز
Sicknesses	اعتلالات	أمراض
Temperature	سخونة	حرارة

- If the content is for professionals or experts, you may use the type of special language or terms that can be understood by the target audience. The following words are examples that can be used to infer that the text is meant for professionals: Intramuscular (IM), Intravenous (IV), anesthetic, scalpel etc. Of course, the list is not a comprehensive one, and the use of these words does not always mean the text is meant for professionals. Translators must exercise discretion, or consult project managers when in doubt.



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- Make sure you find the correct meaning for any term to be translated. Medical texts usually include a lot of acronyms or abbreviations that require specialized dictionaries.

### Technical Translations

- Understanding the target audience is the key for translating technical documents. If the target audience is the general population, use simple language and avoid jargons.
- If the content is for professionals, the translation may include technical terms that are common. Alternatively, the words can be transliterated if the transliteration commonly used or if the translation will not capture the intended meaning.

Examples		
Source	Technical	General
Alternating current	التيار المتناوب	التيار الكهربائي
Diesel	ديزل	وقود

### Further Reading and Acknowledgements

Below are the sources consulted to build these guidelines, together with material that may be of interest to translators and revisers.

1. <https://transarabizers.com/dealing-with-translation-problems-4/>
2. <https://www.rws.com/insights/rws-moravia-blog/nine-pitfalls-of-english-arabic-translation/>
3. <https://www.alfaseeh.com/vb/showthread.php?t=28320> (discussion about final tanween)
4. <https://www.startimes.com/?t=26650143> (List of common errors)
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/ar/articles/art20130702112134018> (verb errors)
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/ar/articles/art20130702112134008> (basics of language)
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/ar/articles/art20130702112134012> (rules of pronouns)
8. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/ar/articles/art20130702112134021> (writing and spelling)