

الفعل الأمر

Imperative verbs are used to give commands such as: “Go to your room!”, “Help me!”, “Take it!”. If you think logically about giving commands, you can only command second person pronouns (you, you all). You will need to learn to form imperative verbs for أنتِ, أنتَ, and أنتوا to speak colloquial Arabic like a boss. Just follow these three simple steps:

1. To begin, conjugate a verb for the second person (أنتِ, أنتَ, أنتوا) in the present tense and remove the present tense conjugation at the front of the verb.

تطلب	←	تطلب (أنتِ)
روحي!	←	تروحي (أنتِ)
ساعدوا!	←	تساعدوا (أنتوا)

Be sure to keep the present tense conjugation at the end of the verb. For most verbs, you have successfully formed an imperative verb! The verbs highlighted in green in the chart above are in their completed imperative form. You can command any of your female friends to روجي or group of friends to ساعدوا.

2. For verbs that have two consonants next to each other with a سكون in between, we need to add a helping vowel at the beginning of the verb. Look at the verb تطلب in the first row of the table above as an example. Without the present tense conjugation, the remaining piece is quite hard to say alone. In order to make the word easier to say, we add a short vowel at the very beginning of the word.

أطلب!	←	تطلب (أنتِ)
أكتب!	←	تكتب (أنتِ)
إسمعي!	←	تسمعي (أنتِ)

Depending on the dialect, there may be some variation as to which short vowel is added. The short vowels common to Shaami Arabic are shown above. Generally, these two rules will serve you well:

- a. If there is a ضمة later in the verb, add a ضمة at the beginning
- b. If there is a كسرة or فتحة later in the verb, add a كسرة at the beginning

Try saying the verbs now, with the addition of the helping vowel—much easier!

3. Two verbs that are commonly used in the imperative are تأكل (you eat) and تأخذ (you take). Notice that each of these verbs has a همزة as the first thing in the root. In Colloquial Arabic, this همزة is generally not pronounced. Rather, the ألف that the همزة sits on is pronounced like a regular long vowel. When forming an imperative of one of these verbs in Colloquial Arabic, both the present tense conjugation and the ألف (where the همزة would be in MSA) are dropped. Examine and learn the pattern below to see what happens when a همزة comes first in a root:

كُل!	←	(انْتِ) تاكل
خدوا!	←	(انتوا) تاخذوا

4. Verbs that have a و as the second letter of the root (like in راح- يروح or قال-يقول), imperatives are formed just by removing the present tense marker. For example:

(انْتِ) قول
(انْتِ) قولي
(انتوا) روحوا

Additional Comments:

Although these three rules will help you to form the imperative of any verb, the following comments address some common things that might trip you up:

- For advanced students:** Pay attention to the وزن/pattern of the verb and look out for a شدة. For example, a verb in pattern فَعَّل does not need a helping vowel at the beginning of the imperative because there is a فتحة between the first two consonants. The شدة in this verb pattern will help you to make imperatives formed from this وزن/pattern sound extra commanding!
- For advanced students:** Another way to understand when to add the helping vowel at the beginning of the imperative is to consider the وزن/pattern. If a verb is of the following patterns, it will take a helping vowel: (I) فَعَلَ, (VII) انْفَعَلَ, (VIII) افْتَعَلَ, (X) اسْتَفْعَلَ.