

Noun-Adjective Agreement - AirBnB

A phrase is an incomplete sentence, such as 'magical apartment' or 'in the bedroom.'

The first one here, 'magical apartment,' is a noun-adjective phrase (the second one is a prepositional phrase).

magical apartment

apartment = noun (thing)

magical = adjective (describing the apartment)

In English, the adjective comes before the noun. In Arabic, as in most languages, the noun comes first - we say 'apartment magical.'

I like to think of adjectives as being stupid followers who can't do anything before their noun exists.

Here is an example with the phrase "magical apartment" or شقة ساحرة

شقة ساحرة

شقة = اسم (noun)

ساحرة = صفة (adjective)

What's more is that every noun has what is termed a 'gender' in Arabic. Every single thing is either 'masculine' or 'feminine.'

Masculine nouns = masculine adjectives

Feminine nouns = feminine adjectives (ة)

Feminine nouns can be feminine by definition such as بنت (girl), or by ta'marbuta ة such as شقة (apartment)

مساحة مخصصة منطقة مشتركة مطبخ مجهز

Masculine nouns (generally) have no ة

بيت كبير التراس الضخم موقع مثالي

Put another way:

The good news is that Arabic has a tell that lets you know if the word is masculine or feminine (unlike French or other 'gendered' languages) - the ta'marbuta or ة.

بيت doesn't have a ة so it is a masculine word. شقة has a ة so it is feminine.

Again, adjectives are followers - they just do whatever their noun is doing. If the noun has a ة, then the adjective had better have a ة as well. AND if the noun has a ال then the adjective following it in a phrase had better have an ال also.

But wait! There's more!

Plural non-human (or non rational beings) adjectives take singular feminine nouns. What do I mean by this?

RATIONAL BEINGS (RB)

- humans
- djinn
- angels
- talking animals

-etc.

NON-RATIONAL BEINGS (NRB)

- inanimate objects
- regular non-talking animals
- etc.

I have an (untestable and therefore totally unproven) hypothesis that this is due to the *jahiliyya* period of Arabic, the time before Islam when peoples in the Arabian peninsula could be Christian and Jewish but could also be animists - worshiping rocks and other objects (in addition to other religions present at the time). People needed a way to distinguish between the rocks that could communicate with you and be worshiped, and rocks that were just... rocks.

This lives on today in Arabic plurals:

FOR PLURAL HUMANS/RATIONAL BEINGS (RB):

Most plurals end in **ون** or **ين**.

These are groups of three or more men, or men and women combined. They are called 'sound masculine plurals.'

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
مصريّ	مصريّون
موظف	موظفون
مشغول	مشغولون

We use **ون** when it is the subject of a sentence, and **ين** when it is just about anything else in a sentence other than the subject:

هم طلاب طيّبون.

In dialects, it is always **ين**:

مصريين طيّبين

What about groups of women or feminine objects (ending in **ة**)?

These plurals end in **ات**. They are called 'sound feminine plurals'

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
مصرية	مصريّات
موظفة	موظفات
مشغولة	مشغولات

This is true no matter where it is in the sentence, and for dialects as well.

ADJECTIVES ARE STUPID CROWDFOLLOWING MORONS.

They just do whatever their noun is doing – including being plural.

مصريون جيّدون

موظفات مشغولات

بنات وحيدات

However, **When describing plural non-rational beings (NRB), aka non-humans:**

Think **S**an **F**rancisco... **S**ingular **F**eminine

إقامات رائعة الأجواء الحادئة خطوات قليلة المحلات التجارية

We already know that adjectives have to match their nouns when they are singular:

إقامة رائعة جو حادئ خطوة قليلة محل تجاري

RB or NRB is irrelevant in singular nouns. BUT it becomes relevant when we are talking about the plurals of these objects.

Here is a helpful flowchart of what to do with your adjectives when describing plurals:

