

Learning Maldivian (Dhivehi)

There are few possibilities to learn Dhivehi. Most of them are scientific linguistic books.

This site is NOT scientific, its purpose is to make learning Dhivehi easy. So the grammar is arranged in a way that allows to learn easily.

It's not perfect, even its sources are not complete (see "literature"). It's more "first aid" in learning Dhivehi.

If you are using a mobile phone, you won't be able to read the Maldivian alphabet

– there are several apps available for free to teach your mobile to read Dhivehi, just look in your app-store.

You'll need a dictionary – there is one available for free as mobile app on google play.

Attention: This site only contains the rules for normal speech. Don't use it when you meet a person of higher rank than you!

Content:

Maldivian script – Thaana

Noun

Pronouns

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Literature used for this site

Maldivian script – Thaana

The Maldivian script is named Thaana. It's written from right to left.

On the line, there are consonants.

Vowels that follow a consonant (or even the lack of a vowel) are written beneath or below.

Example:

letter	English transscription	pronounciation
ބ	b	Like English "b"
ބު	ba	short, vowel sounds like in "but"
ބާ	baa	Long, vowel sounds like in "bath"
ބެ	be	Vowel sounds like in "bench"
ބޭ	bey	Vowel sounds like in Beirut
ބި	bi	Vowel sounds like in "bin"

ބ	bee	Just like the honey-bee
ބް	bo	Vowel sounds like the first “o” in bottom
ބޯ	boa	Long o, vowel sounds like in “ball”
ބު	bu	Vowel sounds like in “book”
ބޯ	boo	Vowel sounds like in “booth”
ބ	b	No vowel following the letter “b”

The vowels are the same with each consonant.

This is the usual transcription.

On twitter, by some people, the long vowels are transcribed by big letters – for lack of space.

So: ba, bA, be, bE, bi, bI, bo, bO, bu, bU

Consonants:

The next table contains consonants, their English transcription and hints for pronunciation. They are in the order of the Maldivian alphabet.

consonants	transcription	pronunciation
ހ	h	“h” like in “house”
ޝ	sh h	Sounds similar to English “sh”, but is spoken with retroflex tongue, that means, the tip of the tongue is up, the air flowing at the sides of the tongue (this consonant exists only in Maldives). - If this consonant stands within a word, bearing the “no vowel”-sign, it doubles the following consonant. - If this consonant stands at the end of a word, bearing the “no-vowel” sign, it’s just a hard stop at the end of the word.
ނ	n	“n” like in “nose”
ރ	r	Rolling “r” like in Scotia, Germany, Singhalese
ބ	b	“b” like in “bee”
ލ	lh	“l” with a retroflex tongue (sound also exists in Singhalese and indian languages) (retroflex: tongue rolled up)
ކ	k	“k”
އ	(not transcribed)	- This consonant marks the beginning of a vowel. It can be heard, if you compare “bio” and “by occasion” – the beginning of the “o” flows in bio and is hard in “by occasion” - If this consonant stands within a word, bearing the “no-vowel”-sign, than it doubles the following consonant. - If this consonant stands at the end of a word, bearing the “no-vowel” sign, it’s just a hard stop at the end of the word. This stop is so hard that to Europeans it sounds like a short “k”.
ވ	v	Like English “v” or “w”

م	m	m
ف	f	f
ذ	dh	Voiceful English “th”
ث	th	English th
	iy	If this consonant stands at the end of a word, bearing the “no-vowel”-sign, it’s pronounced “y”
ل	l	l
ج	g	“g” like in “garden”
ن	gn	Sounds like ny- like gn in Italian “Lasagne” – similar to the start of “news”
س	s	s
د	d	d
ز	z	Voiceful s
ي	y	Y like in “yard”
پ	p	P
ج	j	J like in “jungle”
ك	ch	“ch” like in “chapter”

There are also some special letters:

ش is used quite often, it’s transcribed „sh“ and pronounced just like english „sh“.

The following letters are used for arab consonants (as a muslim country Maldives lent a lot of words from Arabia)

– besides the five described, they are very scarcely used:

ه	“h” or “kh” – an rough h that can be heard.
خ	
ب	
س	
ف	
ج	“gh”
ز	
ق	“q”
ڨ	
ڪ	“kh” – sound between k and h, harder than ه, but not yet a “k”
ڦ	
الله	Allah, means god.

Exercise:

- Write words of your own language with Maldivian letters.
- If you are in Maldives, read tables.
- Read a few lines of a Maldivian newspaper (Dhivehi edition – e.g. haveeru, miadhu ... they are also online available)
- Continue with this exercise, until you know all vowels and all consonants of the first table.

Nouns

1. Genera (kinds):

There's no „male“ or „female“ or „neutral“ –

But there are “human” and “non-human”

And there's defined (the table – meyzu) and undefined (a table – meyzeh, any table - meyzaku)

Learn the defined forms first, later the undefined. That's easier.

2. Declination

a. Cases

N - Nominativ (answer to the question: “who?”)

G - Genitiv (answer to the question: “Whose?”)

D - Dativ (answer to the question: “To whom?”)

A - Accusativ (answer to the question: “whom?”) – usually the same form as N

L - Lokativ (answer to the question: “Where?”)

Abl - Ablativ (answer to the questions: “ from where, of what, by what, through what?”)

And there are little words that just are to be added at the end of a word:

- “aai” – and

- “aa” – with

b. Endings of the words “non-human”:

For one:

case	Defined (the)	Undefined (a)	Undefined (any)
N	-	օֹ-	ֵֹ
G	ֵֹ	ֵֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹ
D	ֵֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹ
A	-	ֵֹֹ	ֵֹֹ
L	ֵֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹֹ
Abl	ֵֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹֹ

For two or more:

case	Defined (the)	Undefined (a and any)
N	ֵֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹֹ
G	ֵֹֹֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹֹֹֹ
D	ֵֹֹֹֹֹֹֹ	ֵֹֹֹֹֹֹֹֹֹֹ

A	فُو	فُوْ
L	فُوْى	فُوْىْ
Abl	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ

Example:

فُوْىْ - room

N	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ
G	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ
D	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ
A	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ
L	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ
Abl	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ	فُوْىْ

c. Endings for the words „human“

For one:

case	Defined (the)	Undefined (a)	Undefined (any)
N	-	اِنْ	اِنْ
G	اِنْ	اِنْ	اِنْ
D	اِنْ	اِنْ	اِنْ
A	-	اِنْ	اِنْ
L	اِنْ	اِنْ	اِنْ
Abl	اِنْ	اِنْ	اِنْ

For two or more:

case	Defined (the)	Undefined (a/any)
N	اِنْ	
G	اِنْ	
D	اِنْ	
A	اِنْ	
L	اِنْ	
Abl		

Words ending with „a“, if they are two or more, will have “in” (expection: meehaa)

Words ending with “i” , if they are two or more, will only have the “n”

Examples:

Kulhuntheriyaa - player

N	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ
G	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ
D	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ
A	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ
L	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ
Abl	نَاسِرْمَرِ	نَاسِرْمَرِ	

Meehaa – man

With this word, the ending –aa only exists in the defined form for one.

N	چَرّ	چَرّ	چَرّ	چَرّ
G	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی
D	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی
A	چَرّ	چَرّ	چَرّ	چَرّ
L	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی
Abl	چَرّی	چَرّی	چَرّی	

Exercise:

Learn defined words first.

Get a dhivehi text, for example of a newspaper, and look for words with these endings.

Mark them.

Take a dictionary and try to translate these single words.

Then do the same with the undefined word-endings.

Special:

Ships: if two or more, -faharu is added: dhoani (boat) – dhoanifaharu (boats)

Generalized: gas (bush, tree) – gasgahaa gehi (vegetation)

Some words just get doubled if two or more:

Bas (word) – basbas (words),

Same: نَسْرَسْر (deeds), مَرْمَر (islands, villages), ڪو ڪو, رَوَر, رَوَر

These exceptions just have to be learned...

Pronouns

Attention! These are the pronouns used in normal speech.

Don't use them for speaking with or about persons of higher rank!

I - أَنَا
 You - أَنْتَ
 He/she - هُوَ
 We - هُمْ / هُنَّ
 You - أَنْتُمْ
 They - هُمْ / هُنَّ

Declination of the pronouns:

N	أَنَا	أَنْتَ	هُوَ	هُمْ	هُنَّ	أَنْتُمْ
G	أَنَا	أَنْتَ	هُوَ	هُمْ	هُنَّ	أَنْتُمْ
D	أَنَا	أَنْتَ	هُوَ	هُمْ	هُنَّ	أَنْتُمْ
A	أَنَا	أَنْتَ	هُوَ	هُمْ	هُنَّ	أَنْتُمْ

Verb

A verb signs what is done.

At the first look, it's easy:

Usually all **persons** use the same ending of the verb.

(I, we = 1; you= 2; he/she/it/they=3)

And there are only three times: presence, future, past.

On the second look, there seem to be innumerable forms of the verbs.

The reason is – there are many ways to look on what is going on. And every way has its own form of the verb (**modus**)

The most easy modus is progressive – the way you just tell something.

With this modus we'll start.

1- I hit - أَنَا أَضْرِبُ
 2- You hit - أَنْتَ أَضْرِبُ
 3- He hits - هُوَ أَضْرِبُ
 1- We hit - هُمْ / هُنَّ أَضْرِبُ
 2- You hit - أَنْتُمْ أَضْرِبُ
 3- They hit - هُمْ / هُنَّ أَضْرِبُ

You see, it's quite easy, as all persons use the same form.

Same:

I eat: أَنَا أَكُلُ

You get: *އަދު ޖަހަންނެއް*

Only exception:

I know: *މަންނަންނެއް*

This is special to Maldivian. In some cases the subject (the actor) is not in nominativ ("Who is acting? – I = *މަންނަންނެއް*") but in Dativ (to me = *މަންނަންނެއް*).

We might also translate: "it's known to me" = "I know"

So to this kind of verbs, there exists only the third person.

There are **3 stems** of each verb. From these roots all forms of the verb are derived: presence, past and a participle (participle shows that something is ready done, like in the first lines of a newspaper: "prices risen!")

Example for stems:

To hit:

Presence: jaha-

Past: jehi-

Participle: jahai-

Learn the blue forms first – to start speaking.

Then the dark red forms. These forms you'll need most!

Remember: if no person is named, it's the same for all persons!

Verbs with more than one syllable, ending in presence stem with an "a":

Example: jaha (hit)

	presence	future	past
stem	<i>ޖަހަ</i>		<i>ޖަހި</i>
Progressive	<i>ޖަހަންނެއް</i>	<i>ޖަހަންނެއް</i>	<i>ޖަހި</i>
Simple		<i>ޖަހަންނެއް</i>	<i>ޖަހި</i>
Person 1+2			
Person 3		<i>ޖަހަންނެއް</i>	<i>ޖަހި</i>
Imperative	<i>ޖަހަ</i>		
Infinitive	<i>ޖަހަން</i>		
Infinitive in dictionary			<i>ޖަހަން</i>
Participle	<i>ޖަހި</i> = stem		<i>ޖަހިފަންނެއް</i> (person 1+2)
			<i>ޖަހިފަންނެއް</i> (person3)

stem: verb without ending

Progressive: way just to tell something – he hits...

Simple telling

Imperative: order: do so!

Participle: doing or done

Similar with the following verbs:

Verbs with one syllable

Example: kanee – eat

	presence	future	past
stem	كَنِ		كَانَ
Progressive	كَانِي	كَانِي	كَانَ
Simple Person 1+2		كَانِي	كَانِي
Person 3		كَانِي	كَانَ
Imperative	كَانِي		
Infinitive	كَانِي		
Infinitive in dictionary			كَانِي
Participle	كَانِي = stem		كَانِي (person 1+2)
			كَانِي (person3)

Verbs with “nn”

	presence	future	past
stem	يَكْنِي		كَانَ
Progressive	يَكْنِي	يَكْنِي	كَانَ
Simple Person 1+2		يَكْنِي	كَانَ
Person 3		يَكْنِي	كَانَ
Imperative	يَكْنِي		
Infinitive	يَكْنِي		
Infinitive in dictionary			
Participle	يَكْنِي = stem		يَكْنِي (person 1+2)

			ދަންނަ (person3)
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Verb “engeneer”

Remember: This kind of verb turns the subject in DATIV, therefore no first or second person.

	presence	future	past
stem	ދަންނަ		ދަންނަ
Progressive	ދަންނަ	ދަންނަ	ދަންނަ
Simple Person 1+2		---	---
Person 3		ދަންނަ	ދަންނަ
Imperative	---		
Infinitive	ދަންނަ		
Infinitive in dictionary			
Participle	ދަންނަ = stem		ދަންނަ (person 1+2)
			ދަންނަ (person3)

Exercise:

Get your dictionary and look for nouns and verbs you need in a special situation.

Form short sentences, only 2 or 3 words, not more than 4.

(don't bother whether they are perfect Dhivehi. But USE some of these sentences when speaking to Maldivian people. Do they understand you?)

Get a newspaper and look for verbs and nouns (Only the forms you know already!).

Look in your dictionary for the translation. What is the article speaking about?

Irregular verbs

presence	Past	participle
go	went	gone
ދިއުމު	ދިއުމު	ދިއުމު
give	gave	given
ދިނުމު	ދިނުމު	ދިނުމު
come	came	come
ދަންނަ	ދަންނަ	ދަންނަ

play	played	played
ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ

Further forms of the verbs

For beginners, this table isn't to learn.

Just use it, when you see or hear a form of a verb that you don't know.

Don't learn them until you're quite sure in the use of the forms above – and:

Don't learn them all at once – just learn one modus after the other.

Continue when you are sure that you use it in the correct way.

Modes:

Relative – used instead of a relative clause : jahaa meehaa – the man who hits...

Habitualis – usually doing

Hortative – similar to imperative – exhortation to do: Do it!

Reason – that what I do is the reason for the following: “because I do”

Temporalis – “When I do this...”

Simultaneous – “while doing this...”

Concessive – “Although I do ...”

Inchoative – I start to do it

Irreal – I would do it, if things weren't as they are : “If I were in parliament...”

Optative – I wish to do it “Let's do it!”

Conditional – If I do this, then...

Successive – After ...

There might be other modes but they are not found in the sources of this site.

There are even more forms, when polite speech is added – but as I said before:

Don't speak Dhivehi with a person of higher rank.

If you are already quite used to speaking Dhivehi, let a Maldivian teach you the polite speech.

modes	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Relative	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Habitual	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ
Hortative	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Reason	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Temporal	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Simultaneous	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ
Simultaneous	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ
Concessive	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Inchoative	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ
Irreal	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ	ޖަހަންނަ/ޖަހަންނަ

29	ސަވަންދަ/ސަވަންދަ
30	ސަވަ

After thirty there are two systems of counting – just find out, which one is used in your region.

31	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
32	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
33	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
34	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
35	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
36	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
37	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
38	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
39	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
40	ސަވަ	
50	އަދަންދަ	
60	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
70	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
80	އަދަންދަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
90	ސަވަ	ސަވަ ދަންދަ

100	ސަވަ
200	އަދަންދަ
300	ސަވަ ދަންދަ
1000	އަދަންދަ

Literature used for this site:

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additional own research

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