

## Alphabet - Lesson 4

The three hard ones

Unfortunately, there are even more exceptions to the “every letter has two forms” rule. There are three letters in Persian that have four forms. The choice of which one to use depends not only on whether it is the last letter of the word or not, but also on whether it is attached to its previous letter or not. The following table and the examples will make things more clear.

sound	Joined beginning joined end	Free beginning free end	Joined beginning free end	Free beginning joined end
glottal stop	ا	ع	ع	ا
gh	غ	غ	غ	غ
h	ه	ه	ه	ه

For all the letters we had seen so far, being joined to the previous letter or not didn't make a difference. As you see, for these four new letters, it does. Here are some examples:

Arab	arab	عَرَب
meaning	ma'ni	مَعْنَى
forbidden	mamnu'	مَمْنُوع
obstacle	māne'	مَانِع
Ghana	ghanā	غَنَّا
Baghdad	baghdād	بَغْدَاد
hen	morgh	مُرْغ
Zoroastrian monk	mogh	مُغ
hockey	hāki	هَآكِي
spring	bahār	بَهَار
fog	meh	مِه
mountain	kuh	كُوه

mountain

The letter "ع" is simply a glottal stop. When coming in the beginning of a word, it has no difference with the case in which the word starts with the letter "ا". Whether to begin the word with "ا" or with the letter "ع" cannot be predicted by the pronunciation and has to be memorized for each word separately. However, few words begin with "ع" in Persian, almost all of them being Arabic loan words.