

LESSON 1**PHONETICS**

The Armenian Alphabet

Letters: Աս էտ Սս Տտ Նն Րր

GRAMMAR

The Definite Article և

Deictic Pronouns: աս, առ, ահ

Word Order, Auxiliary Verb է, and Emphasis

Punctuation: Period, Comma, and Stress

VOCABULARY

Lexical Stress

Text: Արարատ

PHONETICS**The Armenian Alphabet***Historical Note*

The Armenian alphabet was invented at the beginning of the fifth century A.D. by Mesrop Mashtots, a versatile genius—a teacher and scholar, a preacher and soldier, a politician and poet, and artist. He was a precursor of the Golden Age of Armenian literature. He is called Saint Mesrop in the Armenian Church due to the timeless value of his invention: one of the main tools of the historical survival of the nation of Armenia. The alphabet designed by Mesrop Mashtots was a phonetic alphabet built on the principal of *one character for each sound*. The Mesropian alphabet contained thirty-six letters.

In the twelfth century the letters Օ and Ֆ were added. This was a minor reflection of the major language changes in the historical period. Old Armenian was yielding to Middle Armenian, which was quite different in pronunciation and grammar. Օ and Ֆ became the last two letters and to separate the Mesropian alphabet from them, the conjunction Ա (*and*) was inserted between the alphabet and the new addition to it. The Mesropian alphabet was deemed sacred and unalterable. This was an amazing demonstration of the modern concept of copyright. Ա itself is a blend sign, combining two letters: է and լ. Through many centuries of saying the alphabet by heart, the meaning of separation obscured, and Ա became a semantic blend as well, gradually forming another letter in the alphabet (39 letters).

For the sound [u] Mashtots used a combination of two letters, ն and լ, as in the Greek alphabet. The letters նլ and Ա, which were used in the Armenian writing system for fifteen centuries, were officially included in the alphabet of Soviet Armenia. The letter լ was omitted.

Thus with the historical addition of the letters Օ, Ֆ, նլ, and Ա, the Armenian alphabet actually has forty characters. However, the followers of Classical orthography recognize only 38 letters of the Mesropian alphabet, plus Օ and Ֆ. The followers of New orthography, accepted in 1922 in Soviet Armenia and modified later in the forties, recognize thirty nine (39) letters leaving out the letter լ and adding the letters Օ, Ֆ, նլ, Ա. In this book we present all the forty (40) characters of the Armenian alphabet.

Lesson 1

Character Position on the Line

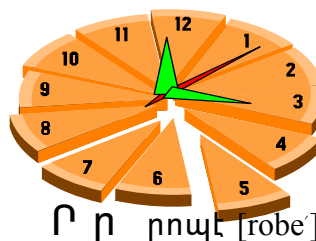
Upper and lower cases are distinguished for all letters except լ. Lower case letters can be divided into four categories according to their position on the line:¹

- Mini letters are situated on the line—for example, ա, ս, ն (like the English *a, m*);
- Tall letters, on and above the line—Ն, Ե (like *l, b*);
- Descending letters are on and below the line—ր, թ (like *q, p*);
- Bisecting letters are on, above, and below the line—է, ի (like the letter *f* or the cursive *J*).

All upper case letters are tall, e.g., Ա, Է, Ն, Ս, Տ, Ր. (cf. the lower case ա, է, ն, ս, ն, թ). Position modification of the letter on the line can result in another letter or make the letter unrecognizable.

Letters

Mini: Ա ա [a] Ս ս [s] Տ տ [d]
Tall: Ն Ն [n]
Descending: Ր թ [r]
Bisecting: Է է [e]



Pronunciation note:

Ա ա and է է are vowels.

Ն Ն, Ս ս, Տ տ, Ր թ are consonants.

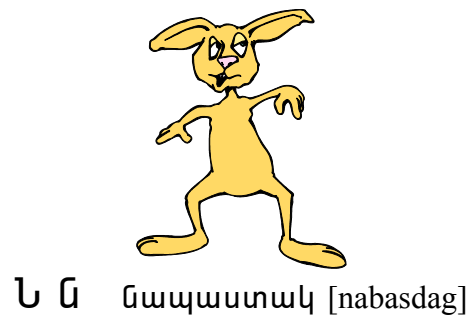
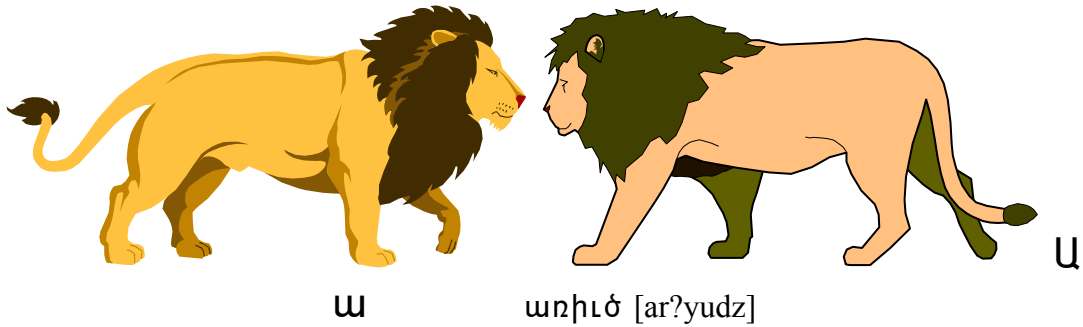
Ր թ is a sonorant.

Each represents only one sound (phoneme).

Ր թ is one of the most frequently used sounds in Armenian, but it is rarely found in initial positions of a word. There are two frequently used words beginning with Ր թ: the proper name Րաֆֆի [raffi] and the word թոպէ [rope] *minute*, more specific to Eastern Armenian.

¹ These terms are taken from the *ABC of Armenian* by Father Luke Arakelian. Mekhitarist Press, Vienna, 1973.

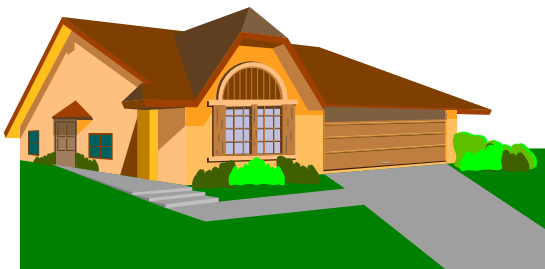
Lesson 1



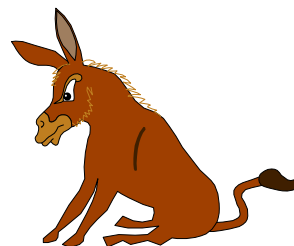
Position in Alphabet	Letter	Letter Name	Key Words	Pronunciation
1	Ա ա	այբ [ajp]	անհիծ	[a]
7	Է է	է [e]	էջ	[e]
22	Ն ն	նու [nu]	նուն	[n]
29	Ս ս	սէ [se]	սկիւն	[s]
31	Տ տ	տիւն [dyun]	տուն	[d] ²
32	Ր ր	րէ [re]	րոպէ	[r]

² Voiceless, unaspirated [t] in Old and Eastern Armenian.

Lesson 1



Տ ս տոուն [dun]



Է է էշ [esh]

Lexical Stress

Armenian has a fixed lexical stress at the end of the word³—e.g., Նարեհ [nare'h] Nareh; Արարատ [Arara't], *Ararat*⁴. **If a word adds a syllable to the end**, the stress moves to the new last syllable—Նարեհէ [nareye'] *from Nareh*; Արարատէ [Ararate'] *from Ararat*. Lexical stress is never marked in written speech. The stress mark ['], called շեշտ [sheshd], is used for the vocatives and imperative verbs and also for special intonation emphasis, mostly in poetry.

Phonetic Drills: Read The Following Words.

Lower Case	Upper Case	Translation
սս	ՍՍ	this
ստ	ՍՏ	that
սն	ՍՆ	he, she, it, that
տաս	ՏԱՍ	ten
տա՛ր	ՏԱՐ՛	take [it somewhere]!
տէր	ՏԷՐ	master, Lord
սէր	ՍԷՐ	love
սար	ՍԱՐ	mountain
սան	ՍԱՆ	godchild, pupil, alumnus
Նարեհ	ՆԱՐԷԷ	feminine name
է	Է	is
էր	ԷՐ	was
Արարատ	ԱՐԱՐԱՏ	Ararat

³ Some exceptions from this rule are presented in lessons 4 and 14.

⁴ The word Արարատ is spelled with տ, the sound [d] of Western Armenian. However, this biblical name mostly maintains the old pronunciation of Classical Armenian.

GRAMMAR

The Definite Article -ն

The definite article -ն is attached to the end of the word it modifies:

- Աս Արարատն է: This is (*the*) Ararat.
- Ատ Նարեկն է: That is Nareh.
- Ան տերն է: He is *the* master.



Note the following differences:

1. Contrary to English, the definite article follows the word modified and is written together with it.
2. Contrary to English, proper names can be used with definite articles—e.g., Ատ Նարեկն է: *That is Nareh.* The definite article indicates *This is not any Nareh (I am pointing at), but I mean this particular woman named Nareh.*
3. Contrary to English, nouns are very often used without any articles:
Արարատ սար է: *Ararat is (a) mountain.*

Deictic Pronouns աս, ատ, ան

All deictic pronouns indicate objects without naming them. The pronouns աս, ատ, ան differentiate location in relation to the speaker.

- Աս *this, it*, shows objects facing or closer to the speaker and is correlated with the pronoun *Ի Ես* [yes].
- Ատ *that, it*, shows objects facing or closer to the listener and is correlated with the pronoun *you դու* [tun].
- Ան *that, it, he/she*, indicates objects out of the conversational domain, close neither to the speaker nor to the listener. Ան is *another* thing or person. That is, in Western Armenian ան also substitutes for the third person personal pronouns: *he* or *she*.



Աս սկիւռն [sgyuf],
աննկ[sung]

Աս, ատ, ան are Western Armenian innovations.⁵

⁵ From Old Armenian այս [ays], այդ [ayt], այն [ayn]. The middle letter of these pronouns, յ, is introduced in Lesson 5. Pronouns are presented in more detail in Lesson 6.

Lesson 1

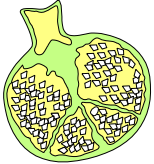
Word Order

The common order of words is subject + predicate (verb), as in English sentences. The word order for the auxiliary verb and the direct object is different.

The Auxiliary Verb է

Contrary to English, the auxiliary verb in Armenian follows the word it concerns (the predicative) e.g.:

Աս սար է:	This <i>is</i> a mountain.
Արան տերն էր:	Ara <i>was</i> the master.



նուր [nuɾ]

The auxiliary verb է indicates grammatical number, person and tense. It has no direct form (Infinitive). է is the third person singular form in the present tense, and էր, the same in the past tense.⁶ է is used as a dictionary form and is called էական բայ (existential verb) in the Armenian grammatical tradition.

Emphasis: The word order is quite flexible and the auxiliary verb can change its position to bring a shift to the logical emphasis of a sentence, compare:

	Աս սար է:	This is a mountain.
But:	Աս է սար:	<i>This</i> is a mountain.
Or:	Ատ սեր էր:	That was love.
	Ատ էր սեր:	<i>That</i> was love.
	Սեր էր ատ:	<i>Love</i> was that.

Direct Object: The direct object, as a rule, precedes the verb, e.g.:

Նարէ՛, աս տա՛ր: Nareh, take *this* along.

Punctuation: Period [.], Comma [,] and Stress [']

The period in Armenian is two dots [:]. The comma [,] is used nearly like in English. Vocative words and imperative verbs always bear the stress mark ['].

Examples:

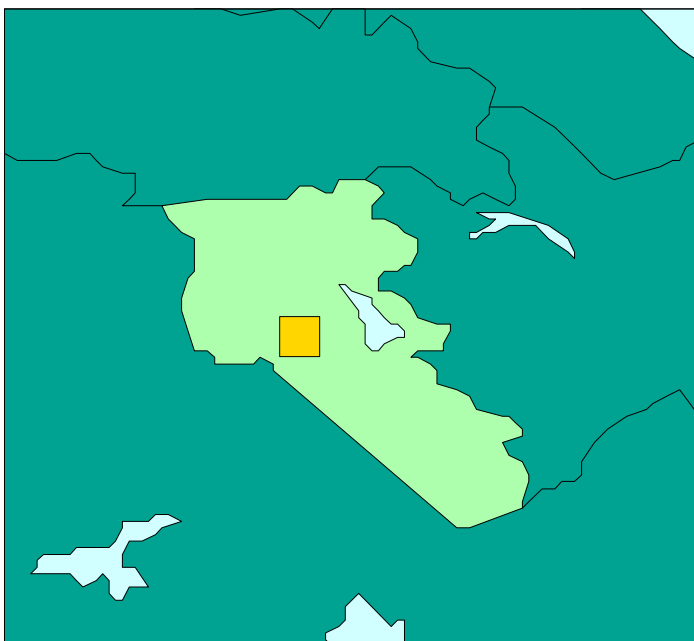
['] [,] [:]	Նարէ՛, աս տա՛ր:	Nareh, take this along.
['] [,] [:]	Նարէ՛, ան տա՛ր:	Nareh, take that along.



սար

⁶ The present tense conjugation paradigm is given in Lesson 4. See also Appendix 8.

Text



ԱՐԱՐԱՏ

Աս սար է: Ատ սար է:

Սարն ատ է: Ան է սար:

Արարատ սար է:

Աս Արարատն է:

Ատ Արարատ սարն է:

Explanations to the Text

Աս սար է:	This is a mountain.	This is the usual word order. This and the following sentences have no indefinite articles, which are necessary for the English translations.
Սարն ատ է:	<i>That</i> is the mountain.	In this and in the next sentence the word order and logical stress are changed for emphasis. The regular word order is ստ սար(ն) է:
Ան է սար:	<i>That</i> is a mountain.	The pronouns ատ and ան are translated identically in such contexts, though ան means “the other or the farther one” (also <i>he/she/it</i>).
Արարատ	Ararat	Ararat, the biblical mountain, also a masculine proper name.
Արարատ սար է:	Ararat is a mountain.	No indefinite article is necessary in simple statements.
Աս Արարատն է:	This is Ararat.	Proper names can have a definite article in Armenian.
Ատ Արարատ սարն է:	This is mount Ararat.	The definite article indicates the singularity of the mount Ararat.

Lesson 1

ASSIGNMENTS

Phonetic Exercises

1. Practice writing the letters Ա ա, Է է, Ն ն, Ս ս, Ր ր;
repeat each letter at least five times.
2. Try to remember the letters in the words and the words in the sentences of the lesson.
3. Fill out the chart, writing the lower case words in upper case and vice versa:

աա	
	ԱՏ
ան	
	ՏԱՍ
տեր	
	ՏԱՐ
սար	
	ՆԱՐԷ
սեր	
	ՍԱՆ
է	
	ԱՐԱՐԱՏ
եր	

4. Make flash cards with pictures and learn the key words to the letters.
5. Place the letters you learned in the alphabet (Appendices 1, 2, 3).
6. Read the text, translate it, and copy it.⁷

⁷ Translations of texts and dialogues for all lessons are given in the Key.

Lesson 1

7. *Change the emphasis in the sentences below following the sample and translate them:*

Աս Նարէն է: This is Nareh.

Աս է Նարէն: *This* is Nareh.

Ատ Արարատն է:

Արարատ սար է:

Արան տէր է:

Ան սան էր:

8. *Translate the following into Armenian:*

1. That is a mountain.
2. *This* is a mountain.
3. Ararat is a mountain.
4. *Ararat* is a mountain.
5. This is mount Ararat.
6. This is love.
7. *This* is Nareh.
8. She was an alumna.
9. Nareh, take it along.
10. Ara is the master.
11. Ara was the master.
12. *Ara* was the master.
13. This is Ara.
14. That is Nareh.
15. That (the farther one) is Ararat.