

General Information:

Persian (Farsi) is the official language of Iran (formerly Persia) and is also widely spoken in Afghanistan (Dari) and in Tajikistan (Tojiki) and the Pamir Mountain region.

The Persian Language is a member of the family of Indo-European languages. As such, Persian is distantly related to the vast majority of European languages, including English. As Indo-European languages, English and Persian have many words of common origin, and many of these cognate words often have similar forms. Examples of these include: English (*Mother*) and Persian (*Madar*), English (*Father*) and Persian (*Pedar*) and English (*Brother*) and Persian (*Baradar*).

Persian is the language of at least 80 million people worldwide. While the most substantial populations are in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, there are also significant numbers in neighbouring countries - including Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey and the Caucasus – and also in the Persian Gulf states. In addition, since the 1979 revolution, emigration from Iran has led to the creation of Persian-speaking diaspora communities in many countries worldwide. The largest urban community of Iranians outside Iran is now in the Los Angeles area.

Three phases may be distinguished in the development of the Persian language: Old, Middle, and Modern. Modern Persian had developed by the 9th century (after the Arab-Islamic conquest). It is a continuation of an area-wide standard language that while it had Middle Persian elements also absorbed a significant Arabic vocabulary.

Farsi belongs to the subgroup of West Iranian languages that include the closely related Persian languages of Dari and Tojik; and the less closely related languages of Luri, Bakhtiari and Kumzari. Other more distantly related languages of this group include Kurdish, spoken in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran; and Baluchi, spoken in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. Even more distantly related are languages of the East Iranian group, which includes Pashtu, spoken in Afghanistan; and Ossete, spoken in North and South Ossetia.

Persian, until recent centuries, was culturally and historically one of the most prominent languages of the Middle East and regions beyond. For example, it was an important language during the reign of the Mughals in India where knowledge of Persian was cultivated and encouraged. Persian scholars were prominent in both Turkish (Ottoman) and Indian courts during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries in composing dictionaries and grammatical works.

Over the centuries, Turkish, Russian, French, German, English and many other languages contributed to the Persian vocabulary. Persian in turn has affected the vocabularies of languages, like Urdu, Hindi, Turkish, Uzbek, and Arabic. Persian words have also influenced other Indo-European languages, like English. Examples include:

Bazaar: from Persian *bāzār* ("market"), from Middle Persian *bahâ-zâr* ("The Place of Prices").

Julep: from Persian *gulab* (rose(gul)-water(ab)).

Pajamas: from Urdu/Hindi *paajaama*, from Persian *pāē (pāy) jāmah*, from *pAy* ("leg") + *jAma* ("garment").

Typhoon: from Persian word *Toofaan*.

Orthography:

Persian (Farsi, Dari) is written using a modified variant of the Arabic alphabet with different pronunciation and more letters, whereas the Tajik variety is typically written in a modified version of the Cyrillic alphabet. It was not until about 150 years after the conversion to Islam that Persian adopted the Arabic alphabet.

In Persian script, 'short' vowels (a, e, o) are usually not represented; only 'long' vowels (ī, u, â) are written in the text. The reader thus has to determine the meaning of a word from context. For example: *kerm* "worm", *kerem* "cream", and *krom* "chrome" are all spelled "krm."

Below are the 32 letters of the modern Persian alphabet.

Name	Transliteration	Final	Medial	Initial	Isolated
Alef	ā / aa / ’		*	/ ī*	
Be	B				
Pe	P				پ
Te	T				
Se	S				
Jim	J				
Cim	c / č / ch				
he(-ye jimi)	H				
Xe	x / kh				
Dâl	D		*	*	
Zâl	Z		*	*	
Re	R		*	*	
Ze	Z		*	*	
Že	ž / zh		*	ž*	ژ

Sin	S			
Šin	š / sh			
Sâd	S			
Zâd	Z			
Tâ	T			
Zâ	Z			
Eyn	‘			
qeyn	q / gh			
Fe	F			
Qâf	q / gh			
Kâf	K			ک
Gâf	G			گ
Lâm	L			
Mim	M			
Nun	N			
Vâv	v / u / ow	*	و*	و
He	H			
Ye	y , i			

Grammar:

Word order in Persian is Subject-Object-Verb although modifiers follow the nouns they modify and the language has prepositions.

Persian is very powerful in word building and versatile in ways a word can be built from combining affixes, stems, nouns and adjectives.

An example set of words derived from a present stem combined with some of available affixes:

Persian	Components	English	Word class
Dān	Dān	Present stem of <i>dānestan</i> (to know)	Verbal stem
Dāneš	dān + -eš	Knowledge	Noun
Dānešmand	dān + -eš + -mand	Scientist	Noun
Dānešgāh	dān + -eš + -gāh	University	Noun
Dānešgāhi	dān + -eš + -gāh + -i	pertaining to university; scholar; scholarly	Adjective
hamdānešgāhi	ham- + dān + -eš + -gāh + -i	university-mate	Noun
Dāneškade	dān + -eš + -kade	Faculty	Noun
Dānā	dān + -ā	wise, learned	Adjective
Dānāyi	dān + -ā + -i	Wisdom	Noun
Nādān	nā- + dān	ignorant; foolish	Adjective
Nādāni	nā- + dān + -i	ignorance; foolishness	Noun
dānande	dān + -ande	one who knows	Adjective
dānandegi	dān + -ande + -i	Knowing	Noun

An example set of words derived from a past stem combined with some of available affixes:

Persian	Components	English	Word class
did	Did	Past stem of <i>didan</i> (to see)	Verbal stem
did	Did	sight; vision	Noun
didan	did + -an	to see	Infinitive
didani	did + -an + -i	worth seeing	Adjective
didār	did + -ār	visit; act of meeting	Noun
didāri	did + -ār + -i	visional, of the sense of sight	Adjective
Dide	did + -e	seen; what seen	Past participle; Noun
Nādide	nâ- + did + -e	what unseen	Noun
Didgāh	did + -gāh	point of view	Noun
Didebān	dide + -bān	watchman	Noun
didebāni	dide + -bān + -i	watchman-ship	Noun

A few Common Persian Phrases/Words:

Salām	Hello
Salām aleikom	Peace be with you
Xodāfez, xodā hāfez	Good bye
Lotfān	Please
Mercī, tashakkor, motashakkeram	Thank you
Enshā 'allāh	God willing
Bebaxshīd	Excuse me
Balé	Yes
Naxeir, na	No
Mard	Man
Zan	Woman

Let's learn some Persian:

1. Salām dust e man.
2. Mā emruz Fārsi yād migirim.
3. Mā bā ham be Fārsi goftogu mikonim.
4. Man Amir hastam.
5. Esm e šomā ci e ?
6. Ruz xoš, xodā negahdār !

Pronunciation

ā arthur, art

š shell, she

x Spanish jose, or Dutch goede

c chair, check

e let, check

u noon, room

Vocabulary

Persian	English	Persian	English
Salām	Hello	mikonim	we do
Dust	Friend	hastam	am
E	Of	esm	name
Man	I, me	šomā	you plural
dust e man	my friend	esm e šomā	your name
Mā	We	ci	what
Emruz	Today	e	short for <i>ast</i> , is
Yād	Memory	ruz	day
Migirim	(we) get	xoš	good, happy

yād migirim (we) learn	xoda	god
Bā	With	negahdār keeper
Ham	each other	xodā negahdār goodbye
be	In	
Goftogu	conversation, chit-chat	

Grammar

- The preposition 'e' is used to relate a name to its adjective, or to another name or pronoun. It is pronounced like the letter e in the words leg, bed. For example: “*dust e Jimmy*” is “Jimmy's friend.”
- Every verb has two roots. The imperative root, and past tense root. Present tense is constructed by adding the prefix *mi-* to the imperative root, and adding the personal suffix. For example the verb *gereftan* (to get):
- *gir* (*imperative root*)
- *mi + gir + am* I get
- *mi + gir + i* you get
- *mi + gir + ad* he, she gets
- *mi + gir + im* we get
- *mi + gir + id* you get
- *mi + gir + and* they get

Like most other Indo-European languages, there are two kinds of verbs, and therefore two kinds of sentences in Persian. Verbs that describe an action, and those that describe a state. If I were to say :

- *Man migiram* (I get)

I would be performing an action. But when I say :

Man Amir hast+am

the verb *hastam* (I am) is not describing an action, but a state. Note that the *mi* prefix is missing in that case.

- *Šomā* is “you’ plural. *To* is “you” singular. *Šomā* is the polite way of referring to your party, especially the first time you meet. *To* is more informal.