

# Tajweed Thoughts

by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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## Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, our Creator, our Sustainer, the one who sent down the Qur'an and granted us the immense blessing of Islam. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Master, Muhammad, his family, and his blessed companions through whom this sacred science has reached us.

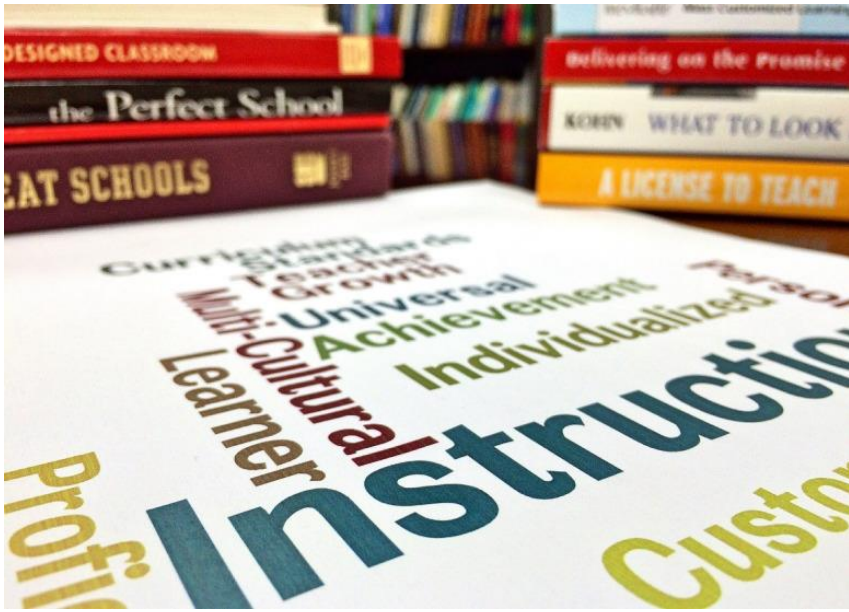
Alhamdulillah, by the great mercy of Allah Taala, I have been blessed to teach Qur'an for over a decade. Throughout these years, students have asked me many important questions about their studies. While some were more easily answered verbally, others required longer written answers. Over the past few years, I have shared these answers on the Recite With Love blog. However, I felt that it would be beneficial to extract the posts that were relevant to students who are just starting their Tajweed journey and to share them separately.

I pray that Allah Most High makes this collection of answers beneficial to all those who teach and learn Tajweed. May He Most High accept it from me, my dear mother, and my respected teachers.

Please feel free to contact me at [recitewithlove@gmail.com](mailto:recitewithlove@gmail.com) to share your thoughts or comments. I would love to hear from you.

Saaima Yacoob

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## Choosing a Teacher

Every student is unique, as is every teacher. Keeping this in mind, how do you find the best Qur'an teacher and program to achieve your Qur'an learning goals?

Here are a few suggestions:

- 1) **Determine what exactly you need to study, is it reading fluency, Tajweed, or are you looking to memorize?**
- 2) **Find a teacher that SPECIALIZES in this subtopic.**

Not all teachers have experience teaching all of these subjects. While some teachers are amazing at strengthening a student's Hifdh, they may never have taught a student how to read Arabic, because the students that came to them already knew how to read.

- 3) **Know what learning method suits you best.**

Are you someone who does well with intensives, or do you prefer to learn small bits of information over a longer period of time?

Do you have any learning disabilities or speech impediments?

Are you a student who loves working at his/her own pace independently, or do you feel more motivated in group settings?

Keep these things in mind as you choose a teacher/program.

#### **4) What are your time constraints?**

How much time do you have to devote to class, reviewing notes, and preparing a recitation portion for the next class per week?

Choose a program that will allow you to achieve your goals in the time you have available. If you have a lot of free time, look for a program that has multiple classes a week. If you feel you are pressed for time, then perhaps, once a week would be better.

#### **5) Teacher/Student chemistry**

It is particularly important that you feel a connection to your teacher. The knowledge of the Qur'an passes from heart to heart, requiring the student and teacher to care for each other for the purpose of the transference of knowledge.

If you feel that either due to personality or language barriers you are not able to develop a connection with your teacher, it would be best to respectfully not continue with the teacher/program.

#### **6) Online or In Person?**

Local classes allow you to be able to see your teacher and for them to see you. This is not always possible online. You also have the benefit of the teacher listening to you without any possible voice quality issues. Lastly, most students develop a stronger bond with a teacher that they meet with physically.

Unfortunately, there are not always enough qualified Qur'an teachers available in every area. Online classes allow you to have access to qualified teachers who may not live in your area. Also, for parents of young children, online classes are usually easier because it allows the parent to take class while the child is otherwise engaged, or to easily arrange childcare with other family members for the duration of the class time. Online learning, however, can seem impersonal at times, and it is highly dependent on the voice quality that your device and internet service can provide.

It is important that students consider all of these questions BEFORE choosing a program. Every teacher/program have their own way of teaching. It's important that you as a student think carefully about your own needs and find a program that suits you best.



## TAJWEED NOTEBOOK

We all have been stuck in that awkward moment when we need to write something down, but can't find a pencil or piece of paper. So, we find ourselves scribbling with crayons on the back of an envelope, or a random flyer. Sometimes, Tajweed notes suffer the same fate. They are written on a random piece of paper (with the intention of them being transferred later), or on a notes app on a smartphone.

Although the crisis is averted in the moment, unfortunately, it doesn't facilitate mastery of the Tajweed Rules. One of the first things my Sheikh told me was that I was required to have a notebook dedicated to the rules he would cover in class. I still have this notebook, and till this day, I write down any new Tajweed rules I learn in the same notebook.

### **Organizing Your Tajweed Notebook**

You can buy a simple spiral notebook, or a journal. Some students even use loose leaf paper that is filed in a binder. You can take notes in the order that you learn



them in class, or you can create sections, and write your new notes in the appropriate section. Here is a suggested list of sections you might need:

-Makharij

-Sifaat

-Ghunnan

-Mudood

-Extra

You can use tabs to separate the various sections, or just fold the first page before a new section begins. You can also buy a multi subject notebook. Make sure to keep this notebook with your mushaf and have it with you at every class.

### **Benefits of a Tajweed Notebook**

Having a notebook dedicated to Tajweed notes helps to know which rules you have covered and which you still need to learn. Also, it serves as a quick reference point for when you are trying to remember a specific rule. Lastly but most importantly, it allows you to easily review the rules you have learned in your previous lesson.

### **Remembering Tajweed Rules**

In all the years that I have been teaching Tajweed, I have only had a few students who always answer my questions about Tajweed rules correctly. These students use the same study technique. Just as they set time aside to practice the recitation

lesson for the next class, they also set aside dedicated time to **memorize** whatever rules were covered in the previous session. Overtime, they have **memorized** all the rules I have ever covered with them. Also, while preparing their recitation lesson, they identify examples of the rules we have already covered. This helps to solidify their understanding of the material, but also makes it easier for them to answer the teacher's questions.

Your Tajweed Notebook is an essential part of your journey. For students who hope to get ijazah, it is indispensable, as mastery of the rules is just as much a requirement for ijazah as mastery in recitation.

I pray this post helps all of us to get our Tajweed Notebooks organized :).



So, it's 2017 and Sheikh Al Husary along with twenty other Qaris is in your purse and in your pocket.

We have lots of apps that start with the word “Qur’an” on our phones, our tablets, and we have tens of websites bookmarked on our web browser. Considering how many resources we have access to, one would think that reciting the Qur’an incorrectly is a thing of the past.

The difficult truth, however, is that although awareness of the science of Tajweed has increased, its mastery, for the most part, has not. There are some extremely effective tools available to Qur’an students today that were not available to our predecessors, and yet, I would argue, our quality of recitation is not drastically better.

This leads us to today’s topic. How can we effectively use the technological tools available to help us improve our recitation?

### **Listening to Recordings of Expert Reciters**

Whether you are memorizing or working on perfecting your recitation, listening to the recitation of expert reciters is always helpful. Unfortunately, many students choose a reciter for the beauty of their voice, or style of recitation. However, one of the drawbacks of the internet is that anyone, and I mean anyone, can upload their recitation. Often, they have beautiful voices, but are not trained reciters, and therefore often have many technical mistakes.

When choosing a reciter to listen to for the purposes of learning, students should choose a reciter that recites slowly, is known to be an expert reciter (holds ijazah), and that the recording is high quality. It is often difficult to hear the subtle points of Tajweed if the recording is of poor quality.

My personal recommendation, as always, is Sheikh Mahmoud Khalil Al-Husary. You can find good quality recordings of his recitation at [www.QuranicAudio.com](http://www.QuranicAudio.com).

## **Reciting with Recordings of Expert Reciters**

If you are using a recording to review a Surah that you have memorized, then you should recite *with* the reciter. However, if you are using the recording to practice your application of Tajweed rules, you will not benefit as much if you recite *with* the reciter. Instead, pause the recording, and recite the ayah that the Qari or Qariah just recited aloud. When we recite with Sheikh Al Husary, most of us feel like we must be reciting just like him, but unfortunately, this is often not the case. When we pause the recording and recite, we are more likely to hear our mistakes.

## **Recording Your Own Recitation**

The problem with Tajweed mistakes is that they are the natural way we say that letter or sound. Our brain does not necessarily identify it as a “mistake.” This means that sometimes when we are practicing, we are simply solidifying our mistake. One of the ways to prevent this is to record **your own recitation** and replay it to yourself. This will allow you to compare your recitation to that of the expert reciter and identify mistakes. Most phones, even non smartphones, have a pre-installed application that allows you to make voice recordings.

Another great time to record your recitation is while you are in class. This allows you to go back and listen to your mistakes, while also listening to your teacher’s corrections and explanations. Just remember to ask your teacher before recording a lesson :).

## **Use Quran Apps**

There are so many wonderful Quran Apps available free of cost. One of the many benefits of these apps is that most of them follow the structure of the 15-line Madinah mushaf. Therefore, for those of us who have memorized or are

memorizing using the 15-line mushaf, these apps provide us the opportunity to review on the bus or even while waiting in a doctor's office.

### **Podcasts and Videos to Learn the Rules of Tajweed**

This is perhaps one of my favorite tools available. Although the rules of Tajweed are standard, every teacher has a unique way of explaining them. Allhamdulillah, with the multitude of videos and podcasts available, we can access multiple explanations of the same concept. This allows students to develop a much deeper understanding of the rules.

These videos and podcasts are a great resource for teachers of Tajweed as well. Teachers can refer students to external resources and use valuable class time to focus on perfecting recitation. Also, recorded lessons allow students to watch a lesson multiple times to solidify their understanding and pause to take notes.

Like anything else, it is important that students use the many resources available to them in a systematic manner, and not haphazardly.

The science of Tajweed is the science of preserving the sound of the Quran. For the past 1400 years mastery in this science has only been achieved by sitting with a teacher of this art. While technology is a tool we can use to learn this science, it does not change the nature of the knowledge itself, or the meticulous system through which we have received it.

*Disclaimer: The author does not benefit monetarily from the purchase or use of any of the resources mentioned above.*



## 5 Amazing Tajweed Textbooks

I am often asked about Tajweed textbooks. Although there are many useful resources out there, there is something about sitting down with a book, highlighting, and making notes in the margins that facilitates learning like nothing else!

In all my years of teaching Tajweed, I have to admit that I have yet to find the one perfect Tajweed textbook in English. There are multiple textbooks that I find beneficial, and each has its own merit. I chose the books listed below because they **use language that is easy to understand**, are **well organized**, and **include charts and activities** that facilitate comprehension and retention.

### ***5. Azharia Educational Textbook***

This rather short and concise Tajweed textbook is published by Dar al Ma'arifah in Damascus. They are also the publishers of the widely used color coded Tajweed *musahif*. I came upon this textbook at a local Islamic Bookstore, and

found it a useful resource to have in my classroom. This book is not a reference book for Tajweed rules, but rather it mainly focuses on the correct **application** of the rules. Each chapter has a very brief explanation of the concept, and then a multitude of examples. This is a great textbook for teachers who are teaching **younger or beginner level Tajweed students**. I found that this textbook would be best used to practice the rules in isolation, before expecting students to apply them when reciting longer selections from the Quran.

Availability: Not as widely available

Price: \$10-\$15 USD

#### ***4. Tajweed Untangled by Zaheer Khatri***

This is by far one of my favorite textbooks to use with **younger learners and beginner students of Tajweed**. I remember sitting in Tajweed classes when I was young and struggling to find examples of the rule we were studying. I would be searching through a long surah, and by the time I found the example, my teacher had moved on to the next topic. This textbook eliminates that problem. Although it only explains basic Tajweed rules, it does so quite effectively through the **use of charts**. It provides examples and **worksheets** that students can complete to solidify their understanding of the concept. The same activities can even be used as an assessment. The days of making your own Tajweed worksheets are almost over

Availability: This book is published by Learning Roots in the UK and is widely available at online Islamic bookstores and Amazon.com.

Price: \$15-\$25 USD

### **3. *Let's Beautify Our Recitation: A complete handbook on Tajweed* by Haroon Baqai**

This textbook is better suited for older learners and goes into more detail about each rule than the two books mentioned above. While it provides a detailed explanation of basic Tajweed rules, it also provides **worksheets and practice activities**, which is not common in most textbooks. It begins with the **basics of reading**, such as letter recognition, vowels, tanween, and shadda. It then moves to explain Tajweed rules such as the rules of Meem Sakinah and the rules of Madd. Although it does not cover all the topics in the science of Tajweed, it is still an excellent resource for **beginner and intermediate students**.

Availability: Widely available at online Islamic bookstores and even Amazon.com!

Price: \$17-\$20 USD

### **2. اللآلىء النقىة: Commentary on Al-Muqaddimah Al-Jazariyyah**

This is a beautiful textbook written by Sheikh Muhammad Saleem Gaibie that follows the **traditional method of studying a text**. He begins the book with a detailed biography of Ibn Al Jazari, one of the foremost scholars of the science of Tajweed. The biography is detailed and is truly a treat to read. He even includes a picture of a manuscript in Ibn Al Jazari's handwriting. He then goes through each section of the Jazariyyah by **translating each line of poetry into English, and then provides a brief commentary**. A special element of this text is that Sheikh Muhammad Saleem also gives the word for word translation for each line. This allows advanced students to develop Arabic vocabulary while studying this text. I would recommend that a student complete at least one of the Tajweed textbooks mentioned above before working their way through this text.

Availability: Available online as a PDF



Cost: Free! You can download it here: [Commentary on the Jazariyyah by Muhammad Saleem Gaibee](#)

### **1. *Tajweed Rules of the Quran* by Ustadha Kareema Czerepinski**

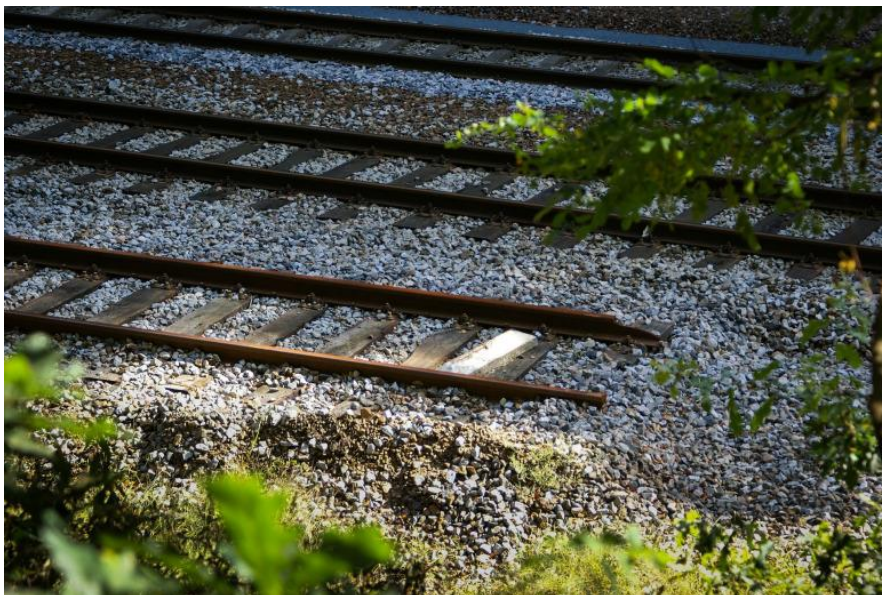
This is a unique Tajweed textbook. Most English language Tajweed textbooks focus on the basic rules of Tajweed, and often do not provide a detailed explanation of each rule. Ustadha Kareema has written this valuable three volume text, which is basically an English language commentary of the well-known poem of Tajweed, the *Jazariyyah*. This three-volume set is an essential resource for all advanced students of Tajweed. The only drawback is that sometimes English linguistic terms are used to explain some rules, and readers may or may not be familiar with those terms. That being said, this is still the most detailed Tajweed textbook I have found in English.

Availability: Widely available at online Islamic bookstores and even Amazon.com.

Price: As low as \$10 USD for each individual volume. The three volume set costs between \$35 – \$50 USD.

I pray that you find this list of textbooks useful either as a teacher in the classroom, or as a student of Tajweed. May Allah Taala reward all the authors of the textbooks above for their effort, and may He make them a source of benefit for the Ummah of His Beloved (SAW). Ameen.

*Disclaimer: The author does not benefit monetarily from the purchase of any of the books above.*



## STRUGGLING TO SUCCEED

Does your journey to recite the Quran with Tajweed feel like the picture of the train tracks above?

You look at your beautiful *mushaf*, admire its calligraphy, listen to expert recitations, try to copy them, and even take classes. Even with all this exposure, why are you not able to achieve perfection?

There can be many reasons why you may feel like you aren't going anywhere. My guess though: it probably has something to do with your practice routine...

Some of the common mistakes that Tajweed students make is not practicing enough, or worse, practicing their mistakes and making them even more entrenched, and lastly, relying solely on recorded recitations rather than reciting on their own.

Here are some tips to help you effectively structure the time you spend practicing.

### **In Class**

1. Make sure you can hear the difference between the correct and incorrect sound.
2. Also, make sure you understand what you are doing incorrectly, such as where exactly your tongue is supposed to be, etc.
3. MARK your mistakes! Circle your mistake, and then write the details in the margin or on a post it, so you remember what exactly your mistake was.
4. If possible, record your class, so that you can revisit your mistakes, and the teacher's correction.

### **After Class**

1. Practice from the *mushaf* with your marked mistakes.
2. Isolate the sound or word you are having a problem with. Sometimes, students insist on repeating the whole ayah, and are not able to concentrate on the sound they are having problems with.
3. Record and listen to yourself saying the sound/word. Sometimes, it is easier to catch your mistake when listening to a recording.
4. You can listen to recordings of expert reciters such as Sheikh Al Husary. However, relying too much on recordings of expert reciters doesn't give you chance to practice your own recitation.

General Advice:

Practice **daily** and remember to apply Tajweed rules **whenever you recite the Quran**, not just when preparing for class. (Daily prayers are an exception, as one should focus on one's prayer and not on Tajweed.)

Do **not regularly** listen to recordings of other Qiraat (ex. Warsh 'an Nafi, Khalaf 'an Hamza, etc.) until you have completed your *ijaza* in the riwayat of Hafs 'an 'Asim.

Lastly, remember that *taufeeq* (success) is only from Allah. Make the effort, and hope in Allah's mercy. I pray that Allah Taala makes all of us among the people of the Quran, those who recite the Quran as it was revealed and embody its message. Ameen.



**A Lump in My Throat: How to get over recitation anxiety**

Have you heard the words, “affective filter?” These two words are an important hypothesis in the theory of second language acquisition (which is what Tajweed is for non-Arab Muslims). Stephen Krashen explains that when the “affective filter” is high, students have a difficult time progressing in learning a second language. Basically, this means that while your stomach is churning, and you are struggling not only with the sound of ع, but also with the lump that seems to be permanently lodged in that *makhraj*, you will have a difficult time learning.

Does that lump sound familiar? It’s been around for so long, I think it may be a permanent feature of my throat now. However, even though we may feel nervous from time to time, consistent anxiety when reciting to a teacher (or even to oneself) can stall a Tajweed student’s progress.

The real question is: how do we get over it? As always, before looking for solutions, it is best to list the problems first. Here are some reasons for why we feel anxious:

1. We are reciting aloud in front of someone.
2. We are afraid that we will make mistakes.
3. We are aware of the immense weight that a mistake in reciting the Quran carries.
4. We want to correct our recitation, but feel frustrated that it isn’t happening.

Believe it or not, sometimes all of this is happening when we are reciting one word! If all or even some of these thoughts go through your head while you are reciting, you will definitely have trouble focusing and enjoying your lesson.

In the following paragraphs, I will take apart each of these issues, and hopefully provide some useful solutions.

### **Reciting Aloud In Front of Someone:**

This feeling is similar to stage fright. For most of us, speaking or singing in front of an audience is not something we do often. So, when we have to recite in class in front of a teacher and sometimes fellow students, it can be debilitating. One of the ways to overcome this feeling is to imagine that you are sitting in a place of peace, like a garden, and reciting by yourself.

Secondly, do not allow yourself to think about what your “audience” is thinking. At the end of the day, we all have mistakes, and our reason for attending class is to correct those mistakes. None of us are trying to develop a fan club through our Tajweed classes! Also, recite in front of others, such as family members on a regular basis in order to gain more confidence.

On a higher spiritual level, we need to come to a place where we realize that every time we recite the Quran, we are reciting to Allah Taala, and the Quran is telling us something about our own condition. When we develop this higher spiritual relationship with the Quran, the size or the nature of the “audience” will no longer make us nervous. It is just you and the Quran in tranquility.

### **We Are Afraid of Making Mistakes**

While in Amman, I had a chance to recite to and make a *khatam* with a Sheikh who was known to hold the highest *sanad* (chain of transmission) in Jordan. You can imagine how nerve wrecking that was! Every time I made a mistake, I would apologize to him profusely. And, each time, he would say, “I love it when you make a mistake, because it allows me to correct it. If I correct it, you will not make that mistake again.” He would say, if you don’t make the mistake in front of me, you may make it later, and I won’t be there to correct it.

Tajweed mistakes help us to purify our intention and be aware of our reality. Anyone who is studying Tajweed for the purposes of feeding their ego, will not achieve mastery due to not being able to bear being corrected. Secondly, our

reality. Our reality as human beings is that we are imperfect. Perfection belongs only to Allah.

Tajweed is an odd science. Its enthusiasts revel in their imperfection, and seek teacher after teacher to can pick out their mistakes.

My advice, don't be scared. Make mistakes, get corrected.

### **The Awareness of the Immense Weight that a Mistake in Reciting the Quran Carries.**

This awareness is something that is a gift from Allah Taala. This particular cause of nervousness is not something we should try to avoid, but rather, we should embrace. This nervousness motivates us to perfect our Tajweed even more. However, if it becomes overwhelming, take a moment to send *salawat* on the Beloved of Allah (May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him).

### **Feeling Frustrated Because You Are Not Able to Fix Your Misakes**

We all feel frustrated when we have done everything we can possibly imagine to fix the pronunciation of a letter or sound. We know the theory, our teacher has explained it to us, and yet, we just can't get it right. Sometimes, this feeling lasts through one week of practice. Other times, it can be months before we can correct a sound. It took me three years to fix my sound of the letter "Ra." This feeling can cause many students to give up, or to feel so frustrated that they are not able to focus during practice sessions.

### **Some practical solutions:**

It never hurts to go over theory and to review multiple sources. Sometimes, another teacher may explain it in a way that makes more sense to you than the way your teacher explained it. For letter pronunciation, I would suggest

visiting [Tajweed In English](#) as well as [AQL Arabic Sounds](#) in addition to listening to your teacher's explanations. Also, take a methodical approach to practicing the sounds and letters. You can find a well outlined approach here: [Makharij ul Huroof: A step by step approach to fixing your pronunciation](#)

But, sometimes, we watch all the videos and follow all the steps, and yet we are still reading it incorrectly. This is an important moment in our spiritual development. Our frustration arises from the fact that we are relying on ourselves to achieve the desired result, not realizing that each and every sound that we are able to produce correctly is simply by the *taufeeq* given to us by Allah. It is only through Allah's grace and mercy upon us that we can correct our recitation. The effort and time spent practicing a letter or a sound is like a *dua*, a prayer entreating Allah Taala to help us and to bless us with the treasure that each letter is.

My Arabic teacher, Ustadh Fahim Qazi of [Quranic Linguistics](#), taught us this *dua*. Reciting this *dua* at moments of frustration will inshAllah remind us to keep our focus on Allah. While we rely on ourselves, we will always feel frustrated.

**The dua:** Ya Fattahu Al Aleem, Iftah lana fathan qareeba. يا فتاح يا علم افتح لنا فتحًا قريبًا.

In this *dua*, we ask Allah: Ya-Fattah, the One who grants openings and victories over and over again, and Ya Aleem, the One who has absolute knowledge of everything, to give us an opening soon.

To conclude, Tajweed is not just a science to be studied. But, rather, the study of Tajweed is a spiritual journey that focuses us on Allah Most High and reminds us of our own imperfection and neediness as servants of Allah. I pray that the tips and thoughts above help us to overcome the anxiety that we experience when reciting.



Photo Credit: By Marius Arnesen from Oslo, Norway (Masjid-e Jami – Herat, Afghanistan) [[CC BY-SA 2.0](#)], via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

### **Makharij ul Huroof: A step by step approach to fixing your pronunciation**



Words are a string of sounds represented in some languages with symbols that together represent a concept, an object, or a person. In Arabic, three letters with distinct shapes and sounds come together to form the word “heart,” قلب, while at the same time reflecting the nature of the heart; it is easily swayed. Changing any letter in this little parcel will definitely alter the meaning. It is not just so with Arabic, but with English as well, saying “I love roses” is not the same as saying “I love noses.”

The little rhymes that we came up with as children by replacing the first letter of a word were indeed quite humorous. However, when we enter into the world of Quranic recitation, the substitution of letters is far from humorous. The beautiful word that represents our most vital organ can be changed to mean “dog,” only by a slight variation in the position of the tongue.

As the knowledge of *Tajweed* spreads, many Muslims are becoming more aware of the importance of pronouncing each letter as it should be pronounced. As we are trying, we are also realizing the difficulty of the endeavor. Our tongue naturally looks for a familiar sound similar to the one we hear, and automatically makes the substitution. Hence, using the sound of the letter “a” for the sound of ع.

How do we stop that automatic substitution? Although it can seem like a daunting task, I pray that the step by step approach outlined below will make the process seem much easier. I pray that students and teachers find it of benefit.

1. **Know the *makhraj*** (point of origination of the letter). You can learn this through *Tajweed* books, or even through videos online.
2. **Make sure you can hear the sound correctly.** Listen to recitations, and make sure you can pick out the sound that you are trying to learn. If you cannot do so, then you need to spend more time listening to a recording, or to your teacher, in order to make sure you can differentiate that sound from similar sounds.
3. While trying to produce the sound, close your eyes, and **focus on the position of your tongue**, and notice exactly where it is. Or **focus on the sensation caused in your throat** when you say the letter correctly. (You will need a teacher to help you at this stage so you are sure that you are producing the correct sound).
4. Remembering the sensation caused by the sound of the letter will help you to know whether you are saying it correctly or not.
5. Another way is to record your recitation and to listen to it to determine whether you are producing the correct sound.
6. Once you have produced the correct sound, (even once), **you are ready to practice.**

7. One of the best ways to practice is to **choose a name of Allah Taala that has that sound in it**, and to say it after every prayer multiple times. Not only will you be making *dhikr*, but also, you will have a routine of practicing that sound. For example, if I am having trouble with the pronouncing the letter ح, then I could choose the name الرحيم and say it multiple times after every prayer to practice the correct sound of the letter ح.

If you cannot hear the difference at all, it is often beneficial to think about the sounds that you do know in the language(s) that you speak. You are probably making an automatic substitution. Once you know which letter in your language you are using to substitute the Arabic letter, it may become easier to not make the automatic substitution.

There are many ways of correcting one's pronunciation of the letters. These are the steps that have helped me and my students to correct our pronunciation :).

### **Tajweed is Like Your Extended Family**

There is a running joke among Tajweed teachers that if you want to test someone's mastery of the rules of Tajweed, quiz them on the *mudood*. That might leave us wondering, why the *mudood*? Frankly, I found the *Sifaat* just as elusive. But unlike other rules, *mudood* are all interconnected, and yet they have definitions and lengths of their own. It's like quizzing someone on the relationships between the members of a large extended family. So, this leads us to the question that I hear most often from students: **How do I master the rules of Tajweed?** The answer: The only way one can know all the relationships between random people, is by being **a part of that family**.

Simply being told, even repeatedly, that the lady wearing the purple scarf and the huge ruby ring is the mother in law of your first cousin's second daughter is never going to help. But, when you sit next to her, and listen to her praise her

daughter in law, who happens to be your cousin's daughter, now that you will remember!

I can tell you from experience, that no matter how much your teacher explains a rule, you will not remember it. However, it's when you make mistakes on that *madd*, and she asks you its name, and makes you say it again, and again, and again, that you will eventually remember, that yes, this is Madd Wajib Muttasil, and I have a problem with making it long enough. Tajweed is a labor of love, each letter, each Tajweed rule is a friend. You have a personal story with each one of them. Until this relationship is developed, it will always be difficult to remember which *madd* is which.

I am writing this, because many people think of Tajweed as a science like physics or even Social Studies. Sometimes, it can feel similar to memorizing the clearly printed definitions of the bold terms in a history book. Unfortunately, Tajweed is not that simple. It is more like an art, where the teacher teaches you the technique, and you spend the rest of your life perfecting it. Nothing in Tajweed is ever completely mastered. Right when you think you've gotten it, you'll discover a slight new nuance, and you will start the process of practicing all over again.

Although metaphors are useful, we all need some practical steps too. Here is how I managed to store and organize all those large interconnected spider webs of Madd rules:

1. Make sure you understand the concept. Ask questions until you get it. (This is where you need a teacher.)
2. Do some basic practice to ensure that you have understood the rule. (You may need a teacher's help with this step too.)
3. Every time you recite the Quran, have your Tajweed notebook close by, and try to identify as many rules as possible.

4. Find someone, a sibling, a friend, your children, even a stuffed panda and try to teach the Tajweed rule you are trying to master.

To close, it is easy to get lost in the delicious organization and detail of Tajweed Rules. But mastering the rules is a very small part of achieving our eventual goal, to recite the Quran as it was recited by the Beloved of Allah (May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.) He (SAW) recited the Quran to the Sahaba and they repeated it to him (SAW). **Listen and repeat:** the original and eternal method connecting us back to that wondrous day when the Beloved of Allah (SAW) heard the words "Recite: In the name of your Lord who created you."



### **The Door that Would Not Open**

I sat in class, week after week, trying halfheartedly to understand the corrections of this perfectionist of a man. I wanted his knowledge, but I just couldn't quite

understand what he was saying. He spoke English for sure, but for some reason, I could understand the words but not what they meant. There was movement of jaws, there was lots of exaggerated smiling. I always thought that somewhere he must have got it wrong. I had studied *Tajweed* for so long, and no one had mentioned smiling jaws.

There I was at the door of knowledge, and I found it closed. My attempts at gaining knowledge were like a body without a soul, and all my attempts to resurrect it were unsuccessful. Until one day, in a moment of anger, I spoke harshly to my “teacher,” and discovered that I wasn’t his student at all. For a student, as he would teach me, not only respected her teacher outwardly, but rather respected her teacher in her heart. And, it was this respect, and this *adab* that was the key to the locked door in front of which I stood.

It was in that moment of realization, and the moment of my sincere apology that this strange, meticulous man who barely spoke to us outside of class would become one of my greatest teachers. *Tajweed* he explained was not about correctness, it was about the preservation of the Quran. He was exacting; every sound had to be correct. Where did he get this energy, this constant motivation to keep correcting, patiently, the same student for three years? It was from his immense love for the beloved Prophet Muhammad (May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him).

He taught us, his students, that reciting the Quran correctly was a labor of love. He introduced us to the immense reality that we now, fourteen centuries later, can say each letter the way the beloved of Allah Taala said it. That was a heavy realization, the realization that *Tajweed* is not just a science of the Quran; it is a way of expressing our love for the Beloved of Allah (May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him).