

Rules of Stopping

When you stop on a word, or at the end of sentence while reciting The Holy Quran, there are some rules we need to follow.

- Firstly: stopping is called Waqf (وَقْف) in Arabic. There are many types of stops in Tajweed. For example “The mandatory stop” which in Arabic is called Al-Waqf Al-Laazim (الْوَقْفُ الْأَزِم), or “The optional stop” – in Arabic Al-Waqf Al-Jaa'iz (الْوَقْفُ الْجَائِز).
- Secondly: A stop in the Quran is usually marked with big circle on the middle of the line with a number inside it, which is the number of this Ayah¹.
- Thirdly: To stop (وَقْف) reading; means to stop the utterance of letters and take a breath. For example at the end of the Ayah الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
- Fourthly: There is something in between stopping and continuing called Saktah (سَكْتَة), which means that you stop the utterance of letters but do not take a breath.
- Fifthly: The letter that you stop on when doing Waqf, is pronounced differently compared to how would read it if you were to carry on and join it with the next letter or word.

¹ Ayah is an Arabic word which in English means a sign. Each sentence in The Holy Quran is called an Ayah / sign because each one is sign or indication of Allah existence and his unmatched miracle The Holy Quran.

How to pronounce the letter you stop on:

If the letter that you stop on, or pause on has a single Fatha, Kasra or Dhammah; then we will stop on this letter by pronouncing it as if it's Saakin.

But if you carry on and join this letter with the next word, then you will pronounce it just as it's written.

For example at the end of the Aayah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

We can see that the last letter of this sentence is a Noon with a Fatha on top. When we stop on this letter / word, we will pronounce this Noon as if it's Saakin by saying Aalameen (عَالَمِينَ), and not Aalameena (العَالَمِينَ).

However if you were to join this Aayah with the next like this:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢) الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In this case we will pronounce the Fatha on top of the Noon at end of Aayah number two, just as it is written and not like a Saakin. Therefore we will join the two sentences like this: "Al aalameenar Rahmaanir Raheem"

If the letter that you stop on, or pause on has a double Fatha, Kasra or Dhammah; then just like the single Fatha, Kasrah or Dhammah; we will stop on this letter by pronouncing it as if it's Saakin.

But if you carry on and join this letter with the next word, then you will pronounce it just as it's written.

For example at the end of the Aayah:

سَيُضْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

We can see that the last letter of this sentence is a Baa with a double Kasrah underneath it. When we stop on this letter / word, we will pronounce this Baa as if it's Saakin by saying Lahab (لَهَبٍ), and not Lahabin (لَهَبِ).

However if you were to join this Aayah with the next like this:

سَيُضْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ (٣) وَأَمْرَاتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ

In this case we will pronounce the double Kasrah underneath the Baa at the end of Aayah number three, just as it is written and not like a Saakin.

Therefore we will join the two sentences like this:

“Lahabewwnn wamra'athuh”

When we join the Tanween underneath the Baa in Lahabin, with the Waaw at the beginning of the next sentence; we need to apply the rule of Idghaam with Ghunnah²

However – If the letter that you stop on, or pause on, has a double

Fatha and then an Alif right next to it: then the rule will be slightly different.

We will pronounce this letter with a single Fatha and a two Harkaat long Madd. But if you carry on and join this letter with the next word, then you will pronounce it just as it's written without the Madd.

² __If any of the four letters of Idghaam with Ghunnah (which are ي ن م و) come after Noon Saakin or Tanween, then you must merge them with a two Harakaat long nasal sound.__

For example when we stop on the Aayaath³ of Surathul Aadiyaath (سُورَةُ الْعَادِيَّاتِ);

وَالْعَادِيَّاتِ ضَبْحًا (١) فَالْمُورِيَّاتِ قَدْحًا (٢) فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا

If we stop on any of these sentences, we will pronounce only one Fatha from last letter of each and make this Fatha long by doing Two Harakaat Madd.

This Two Harakaat Madd is called “The replacing Madd” (Maddul Iwad – مَدُّ الْعَوَضِ). It's called the replacing Madd because when we stopped on this letter, there were two Fathas, but we only pronounced one. But this Madd came and replaced that missing Fatha by making a Madd sound. In other words; it's called The replacing Madd because it replaces one of the unpronounced Fathas.

If however we don't stop, and carry on reading at the end of these Aayaath by joining them with the next word, then there will be no Madd and we will recite the last letter of the Aayah exactly how its written. Hence when joining the end of Aayah one of Surah Aadiyaath, with the beginning of Aayah number two, the rule of Ikhfaa will be applied.⁴

³ Aayaath is the plural of the Arabic word Aayah which was explained earlier

⁴ (ت ث ج د ذ ز س ش ص ض ط ظ ف ق ك -) come after Noon Saakin or Tanween then you must make a slight nasal sound for 2 Harkaat.__

Waqf in which the place of stopping is considered

This Waqf is four types:

1. The complete Waqf (Al-Waqf At-Taam – الوقف التام)
2. The sufficient Waqf (Al-Waqf Al-Kaafi – الوقف الكافي)
3. The acceptable Waqf (Al-Waqf Al-Hasan – الوقف الحسن)
4. The unacceptable Waqf (Al Waqf Al-Qabeeh – الوقف القبيح)

The complete Waqf

(Al-Waqf At-Taam – الوقف التام)

This is to stop in such a place; where the sentence is complete, and there is no connection in the meaning of the sentence and the one before it, or after it. For example at the end of the Aayah:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Only you (Oh Allah) we worship and only you we rely on for help.

Note: It is Sunnah⁵ to stop at the end of each Ayah which is marked and numbered in The Holy Quran.

⁵ Sunnah means that this is something the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, did or liked.

The sufficient Waqf

(Al-Waqf Al-Kaafi – الْوَقْفُ الْكَافِي)

This is to stop in a place where the sentence is complete, but there is a connection in meaning with the sentence before it or after it. For example at the end of Aayah number 2 in Surah Baqarah:

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ ۚ فِيهِ ۚ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٢) الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

That is the book (The Holy Quran) in which there is no doubt, a guidance for the Muttaqeen.

Those (Muttaqeen) who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend from that which we have granted them.

The acceptable Waqf

(Al-Waqf Al-Hasan – الْوَقْفُ الْحَسَنُ)

This is to stop in a place where the phrase is complete, but there is a connection in both meaning and word of this phrase, with the one before it or after it. For example if someone decided to stop on: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ which is only half way through Aayah number 1 of Surah Fatiha.

The unacceptable Waqf

(Al Waqf Al-Qabeeh – الوقف القبيح)

This is to stop in such a place where the sentence or phrase is incomplete, and there are connections in the word and meaning of it, with what's before and after. To stop in place like this would disturb the meaning of what's being recited. For example if someone decided to stop at:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ

Oh you who believe do not come close to Salah...

You shouldn't stop here because neither the sentence nor the meaning nor the word, are complete. Stopping here would disturb the meaning this Ayah and the message of The Holy Quran. Therefore it's very important to read on a little bit more to make sense of the Ayah. For example you can pause at:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ

Oh you who believe do not come close to Salah while you are intoxicated...

Note: if someone runs out of breath and feels like he/she can't continue reading with that same breath, they are allowed to stop wherever they need to because of this necessity. They should then catch their breath and continue reading by starting from a few words before where they stopped so that the Ayah is coherent⁶.

⁶ Makes sense.