

Ezafe

Ezafe is the short vowel “َ” (pronounced similar to the letter “e” in English “ten”) used as a linking word between two nouns (or pronouns). It is rarely written but always pronounced. The ezafe expresses different relations between words:

Adjectives

Adjectives are linked to their noun using an ezafe. Unlike English, the noun precedes its adjective in Persian.

bad boy	پسر بد	good thing	چیز خوب
short film	فیلم کوتاه	long day	روز بلند
small lamp	لامپ کوچک	big city	شهر بزرگ
ugly creature	موجود زشت	beautiful name	اسم قشنگ
cold night	شب سرد	warm day	روز گرم
dirty money	پول کثیف	clean room	اتاق تمیز
weak team	تیم ضعیف	strong soldier	سرباز قوی
sad old man	پیرمرد ناراحت	happy old woman	پیرزن خوشحال
old clothes	لباس کهنه	new year	سال نو

When the noun ends with a vowel, another letter or sound should step between the ezafe and the noun to prevent the two vowels being pronounced right after each other. This letter is “ی”, which in this position, should be pronounced like the letter “y” in the English word “yes”.

silent house خانه‌ی ساکت

next week هفته‌ی بعد

The letter “ی” in this case is always pronounced but not always written. In fact, writing it as a separate letter is a very new standard and is only common in Iran. The conventional way is to simply avoid writing it.

An adjective can follow a singular or plural noun. As in English, the adjective stays in single form when the noun becomes plural. One noun can take one or more adjectives.

great men مردان بزرگ

dirty big cities شهرهای بزرگ کثیف

As you see in the above example, the letter “ی” is used here again to link two vowels together.

As in English, the word “و”, meaning “and”, can come to attribute more than one adjective to a noun or more than one noun to an adjective:

big and clean houses خانه‌های بزرگ و تمیز

beautiful cities and villages شهرها و روستاهای قشنگ

Notice that the word “و” can be read both as “o” and “va”, but the latter sounds rather formal.

Possession

The ezafe is used for indicating possession as well. The possessor follows the possessed.

Maryam's friend	دوست مریم	Ali's book	کتاب علی
My eyes	چشم‌های من	Our house	خانه‌ی ما

If any of the words has adjectives, its adjectives come right after it.

The garden's big tree	درخت بزرگ باغ
The big garden's tree	درخت باغ بزرگ

Place and Direction

Many of the words indicating place and direction are followed by an ezafe when preceding a noun.

under the bed	زیر تخت	on the table	روی میز
below the hill	پایین تپه	above the clouds	بالای ابرها
outside the room	بیرون اتاق	inside the city	توی شهر

Other Usages

The following are just some examples of other situations where the ezafe is used.

Azadi square	میدان آزادی	the month of Bahman	ماه بهمن
Ms. Nasserri	خانم ناصری	the city of Tehran	شهر تهران