



إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

"Only those of His servants who have knowledge truly fear Allah." (Fāṭir 35:28)

Adab Before 'Ilm

Character building for the student of knowledge: ten traits to carry into every class, with a self-check and a 30-day plan.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Why adab comes first

Our scholars used to say that a student should learn **adab** (good manners and character) before ‘ilm (knowledge). Knowledge in a heart without adab can make a person proud, argumentative and harsh. Knowledge in a heart with adab makes a person humble, truthful and useful to others. That is the student Himaayah wants to raise.

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ
طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever takes a path seeking knowledge, Allah makes easy for him a path to Paradise.”

Narrated by Muslim (2699).

Imām Mālik said that his mother dressed him for his lessons and told him:

اْذْهَبْ إِلَى رَبِيعَةَ فَتَعَلَّمْ مِنْ أَدَبِهِ قَبْلَ عِلْمِهِ

“Go to Rabī‘ah and learn from his adab before his knowledge.”

Reported about Imām Mālik and his teacher Rabī‘ah ibn Abī ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān.

And ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak is reported to have said: “We were more in need of a little adab than of a lot of knowledge.”

How to use this guide

1

Read **one trait a week**. Read the verse or hadith, think about what it looks like in your own day, and choose one small action.

2

Fill in the **self-assessment** on page 14 now, and again after ten weeks. Be honest; nobody marks it but you.

3

Use the **30-day tracker** to turn one trait into a habit.

4

Parents and teachers: read a trait with your child or class and talk about it for five minutes.

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Trait 1 Sincerity (ikhlāṣ)

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

“Actions are only by intentions, and every person will have only what they intended.”

Narrated by al-Bukhārī (1) and Muslim (1907).

Every lesson starts in the heart. A student who studies to please Allah, to worship Him correctly and to benefit people is rewarded for every hour, even the hard ones. A student who studies only to show off, win arguments or be praised loses the blessing of what they learn. The Prophet ﷺ warned that whoever seeks knowledge that should be sought for Allah, only to gain something of this world, will not find the fragrance of Paradise (Abū Dāwūd, 3664).

What it looks like

- Renewing your intention before class: “I am learning this to worship Allah better and to benefit others.”
- Studying as well when nobody is watching as when your teacher or parents are.
- Being happy when a classmate gets the answer, not only when you do.

Try this week

- Before each class this week, say your intention quietly to yourself.
- Write your intention for seeking knowledge on the first page of your notebook.
- Do one good study act each day that nobody else will know about.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 2 Humility (tawāḍu')

وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ

“No one humbles himself for Allah except that Allah raises him.”

Narrated by Muslim (2588).

Pride is the first wall between a student and knowledge. The proud student will not ask, will not admit a mistake and will not accept correction from someone younger. The more a true student learns, the more they see how much they do not know.

لَا يَتَعَلَّمُ الْعِلْمَ مُسْتَحْيٍ وَلَا مُسْتَكْبِرٌ

“Knowledge is not learned by one who is too shy or one who is too proud.”

The saying of Mujāhid, reported by al-Bukhārī in the Book of Knowledge.

What it looks like

- Asking a question when you do not understand, even in front of others.
- Accepting correction politely, even from a classmate or a younger student.
- Not looking down on a student who is slower or in a lower level.

Try this week

- Ask at least one question in every class this week.
- When someone corrects you, say “Jazāk Allāhu khayran” and fix it.
- Help a classmate who is struggling, without making them feel small.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 3 Adab with the teacher

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا
عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا

“Mūsā said to him, ‘May I follow you so that you teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught?’”

Al-Kahf 18:66.

Mūsā (‘alayhis-salām) was a great prophet, yet he travelled to learn from al-Khiḍr and asked him politely, as a request, not a demand. When al-Khiḍr warned him it would be hard, he promised: “You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in any matter” (al-Kahf 18:69). Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī is reported to have turned the pages in front of his teacher Mālīk very gently, out of respect, so that Mālīk would not hear the sound.

What it looks like

- Arriving on time, ready, with your book, pen and lesson revised.
- Listening without interrupting, and asking at the right moment and in a respectful tone.
- Speaking well of your teacher in their absence and making du‘ā’ for them.
- In online classes: camera and microphone as your teacher asks, a quiet place, and no other tabs or chats open.

Try this week

- Join every class this week a few minutes early.
- Make du‘ā’ for your teachers by name after one prayer each day.
- Thank your teacher at the end of a lesson.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 4 Adab with classmates and books

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

“None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

Narrated by al-Bukhārī (13) and Muslim (45).

Your classmates are your companions on the path. Wanting good for them, sharing notes, and never mocking a wrong answer are part of the knowledge you are seeking. Books and the mushaf also have rights: they carry the words of Allah, the words of His Messenger ﷺ and the work of scholars.

What it looks like

- Greeting your classmates with salām and keeping the class chat respectful.
- Never laughing at a mistake in recitation or a wrong answer.
- Handling the mushaf and your books with care: clean hands, never on the floor, nothing placed on top of the mushaf.
- Returning borrowed books and notes on time and in good condition.

Try this week

- Share something useful you learned with a classmate.
- Tidy and cover your books, and give your mushaf a clean, high place.
- Send a kind message to a classmate who missed class.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 5 Acting on what you learn

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do?”

Aṣ-Ṣaff 61:2.

Knowledge is a trust, and we will be asked about it. The Prophet ﷺ said that a servant's feet will not move on the Day of Judgement until he is asked about four things, among them his knowledge and what he did with it (at-Tirmidhī, 2417). The Companions used to learn a few verses and not move on until they had learned the knowledge and the action in them.

What it looks like

- Praying on time after learning the times of prayer.
- Saying the adhkār you memorised, not only reciting them in class.
- Being more honest, more patient and kinder at home as you learn more.

Try this week

- Choose one thing you learned this month and practise it every day this week.
- At night, ask yourself: “What did I learn today, and did I act on it?”
- Teach your family one sunnah you learned and do it together.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 6 Guarding the tongue

أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِي رَبَضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ
وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقًا

“I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for whoever leaves arguing, even if he is right.”

Narrated by Abū Dāwūd (4800); graded ḥasan.

A student of knowledge discusses to reach the truth, not to win. Arguing to defeat others hardens the heart and drives away blessing. The tongue can also ruin knowledge through backbiting, mocking and careless speech, online and offline.

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ
لِيَصْمُتْ

“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or stay silent.”

Narrated by al-Bukhārī (6018) and Muslim (47).

What it looks like

- Disagreeing politely: “I understood it differently; can we ask the teacher?”
- Leaving a discussion that has turned into a fight, even when you are sure you are right.
- Not posting or forwarding things about people that you would not say to their face.

Try this week

- Leave one argument this week, calmly and without the last word.
- Before you speak or post, ask: is it true, is it kind, is it needed?
- Replace one complaint each day with a word of thanks.

Trait 7 Saying “I do not know”

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.”

Al-Isrā’ 17:36.

It takes courage to say “I do not know” or “Allah knows best”. ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu) said: “Whoever knows something, let him say it, and whoever does not know, let him say ‘Allah knows best’, for it is part of knowledge to say about what you do not know: Allah knows best” (al-Bukhārī, 4809). Imām Mālik is reported to have answered many questions put to him with “I do not know”.

What it looks like

- Not guessing about what is ḥalāl or ḥarām, or what a verse or hadith means.
- Checking a hadith before you share it, and saying where you learned something.
- Saying “Let me ask my teacher” instead of giving a fatwa to friends.

Try this week

- When you are not sure this week, say “I don’t know, let me check”.
- Before forwarding any hadith or Islamic message, find its source.
- Write down one question you could not answer and ask your teacher.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 8 Patience (ṣabr)

لَا يُسْتَطَاعُ الْعِلْمُ بِرَاحَةِ الْجِسْمِ

“Knowledge cannot be gained with a resting body.”

The saying of Yaḥyā ibn Abī Kathīr, reported by Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ (Book of the Places of Prayer).

Every student hits hard days: a lesson that will not stay in memory, a rule in naḥw that makes no sense, a test that went badly. Patience means continuing anyway, a little every day, trusting that Allah rewards effort and not only results. Mūsā promised al-Khiḍr patience before he learned anything from him.

What it looks like

- Revising a difficult lesson again instead of giving up after one try.
- Accepting a low mark calmly and asking what to fix.
- Staying in a long class with focus, without complaining.

Try this week

- Pick your hardest subject and give it ten extra minutes every day.
- After a disappointing result, write three things you will do differently.
- Make du‘ā’ for ease before you study: “Rabbi zidnī ‘ilmā.”

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 9 Time and discipline

نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُورٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ: الصَّحَّةُ
وَالْفَرَاغُ

“Two blessings many people lose out on: health and free time.”

Narrated by al-Bukhārī (6412).

Students today lose more time to screens than to anything else. A disciplined student guards their time like money: a fixed time for revision, a fixed time for sleep, and a phone that serves them instead of ruling them. Small, steady habits beat long, rare bursts.

What it looks like

- A daily study and revision time that you keep, even when you do not feel like it.
- Phone away or on silent during class and revision.
- Sleeping early enough to wake for Fajr and study fresh.

Try this week

- Write a simple daily timetable and stick to it for seven days.
- Check your screen time at the end of the week and cut one hour.
- Use the time after Fajr for Qur'an or revision every day.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Trait 10 Gratitude and sharing

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“If you are grateful, I will surely increase you.”

Ibrāhīm 14:7.

Knowledge is a gift from Allah, and gratitude keeps it growing. We thank Allah, and we thank the people He used to reach us: parents who pay and wake us, teachers who correct us. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever does not thank people does not thank Allah” (Abū Dāwūd, 4811), and “Convey from me, even one verse” (al-Bukhārī, 3461).

What it looks like

- Saying alḥamdulillāh after learning something new.
- Thanking your parents and teachers in words and in du‘ā’.
- Teaching a younger sibling or friend what you learned, correctly and kindly.

Try this week

- Thank one parent and one teacher personally this week.
- Teach one thing you learned to a family member.
- Each night, write one blessing of knowledge you are grateful for.

Activities

1 My reflection: how did it go this week, and what will I keep doing?

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Rate yourself from 1 (I rarely do this) to 5 (I almost always do this). Do it now, and again after ten weeks. Ask a parent or teacher to rate you too, and compare.

Trait	Now	After 10 weeks	Parent or teacher
Sincerity: I study for Allah, not for praise			
Humility: I ask questions and accept correction			
I respect, listen to and make du‘ā’ for my teachers			
I am kind to classmates and careful with my books			
I act on what I learn			
I leave arguments and guard my tongue			
I say “I do not know” when I don’t			
I keep going when lessons are hard			
I use my time well and control my phone			
I thank Allah and people, and share what I learn			

The trait I will work on first

Habit My 30-day adab tracker

Choose one small daily action from a trait, for example “ask one question in class” or “renew my intention before study”. Tick each day you do it. If you miss a day, do not give up; just tick the next one.

My trait	
My daily action	
Start date	

Days 1–6	Days 7–12	Days 13–18	Days 19–24	Days 25–30
Day 1 ☐	Day 7 ☐	Day 13 ☐	Day 19 ☐	Day 25 ☐
Day 2 ☐	Day 8 ☐	Day 14 ☐	Day 20 ☐	Day 26 ☐
Day 3 ☐	Day 9 ☐	Day 15 ☐	Day 21 ☐	Day 27 ☐
Day 4 ☐	Day 10 ☐	Day 16 ☐	Day 22 ☐	Day 28 ☐
Day 5 ☐	Day 11 ☐	Day 17 ☐	Day 23 ☐	Day 29 ☐
Day 6 ☐	Day 12 ☐	Day 18 ☐	Day 24 ☐	Day 30 ☐

After 30 days

Question	My answer
What changed in me?	
What was hardest?	
Which trait next?	

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا، وَرِزْقًا طَيِّبًا، وَعَمَلًا مُتَقَبَّلًا

“O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge, good provision and accepted deeds.”

Narrated by Ibn Mājah (925); graded authentic. The Prophet ﷺ said it after the Fajr prayer.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

“And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge.”

Ṭā Hā 20:114.

For parents and teachers

Children learn adab more from what they see than from what they are told. Greet them with respect, keep your promises, say “I do not know” when you don’t, and thank them when they help.

Praise character, not only marks: “You were patient with that lesson” teaches more than “Well done for the grade”.

Learn with the Himaayah Madrasah

At Himaayah, adab is taught alongside Qur’an, Arabic, fiqh, ḥadīth and tawḥīd, five classes a week, by teachers who know each student by name.

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Knowledge that shows in character.

This free guide from the Himaayah Madrasah helps students of every level build the character that makes knowledge beneficial: sincere, humble, patient and acting on what they learn.

- Sincerity, humility and respect for teachers
- Acting on what you learn, and guarding the tongue
- Saying "I do not know", and patience in the long road
- Time, discipline, gratitude and sharing knowledge
- A self-check and a 30-day character tracker



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