

Reading

1 Look at the different subheadings for the text. Quickly read the text and put the subheadings in the correct places 1–4.

- a The Basics of Arabic Calligraphy
- b What is Arabic Calligraphy?
- c Calligraphy Around the World
- d Competitions in the UAE



The Art of *Handwriting*

1 _____

Arabic calligraphy is the artistic practice of handwriting using the Arabic language and alphabet. It started hundreds of years ago and is known in Arabic as khatt, taken from the word 'line'.

2 _____

Calligraphy uses different fonts and scripts. One of the most famous ones is naskh which is one of six major scripts. It is the same font as the one taught to young school children. Special tools are required for Arabic calligraphy; these are different from equipment needed for western calligraphy like fountain pens. For example, the celi is a traditional tool for large-scale writing made from hardwood and it is the same tool as the one used today for large size calligraphy art. Bamboo pens are also essential for this art, and have been used for many years. Most importantly, a special kind of paper called ebru is used to give the writing a 'marble' effect when it's complete.

Calligraphers start by learning about the different scripts and practising individual letters. After mastering these, they then move on to joining letters and creating their own designs and layouts. Calligraphy needs a lot of patience and accuracy.

3 _____

The Ministry of Culture in the UAE takes special interest in Arabic calligraphy and classical Arabic art including poetry and traditional Islamic design. Through many initiatives such as competitions, the Ministry aims to create a global community supporting the Arabic language. For example, the Burda calligraphy award based in the UAE started in 2006. Applicants for this award are younger people between 12 and 18 years old. The award celebrates the role of arts and culture in the Arab World. The award is separated into two categories; traditional and modern. The winners are not only from the UAE, they include candidates from around the world, which allows artists to exchange ideas and inspiration from other cultures and countries. The decision on winners is made by a panel that includes judges with local and international expertise.

4 _____

Several countries around the world have also launched initiatives to revive and encourage the development of Islamic calligraphy. The programmes are usually under the sponsorship of ministries of culture and art, in countries including Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The programmes include several activities such as basic and advanced calligraphy classes, competitions and government funded commissions for aspiring artists.