



# Skill Super-heroes

AIMEN AND JAVERIA'S EPIC LEARNING ADVENTURE

(FOR TEENS)



An inspiring story based on the book 'The first 20 hours'

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY  
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# Ummul Qura Masjid Project

Our vision for UMMUL QURA MASJID AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (being built at 64 Eva St. Maddington, Western Australia) is that it should be as closely aligned to the model of the Masjid of the Prophet ﷺ as possible. You can also become a part of this great Sadaqa Jariyyah opportunity by spending your time, effort, and money on this noble cause. An overview of some of the planned services from this center are as follows:



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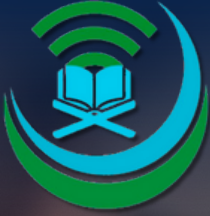
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



**Sama-O-Basr**

لَوْجِهَ اللَّهِ لَا تُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

Only for Allah's pleasure! We neither seek reward from you nor thanks.

(Published in Aug 2023 in Australia)

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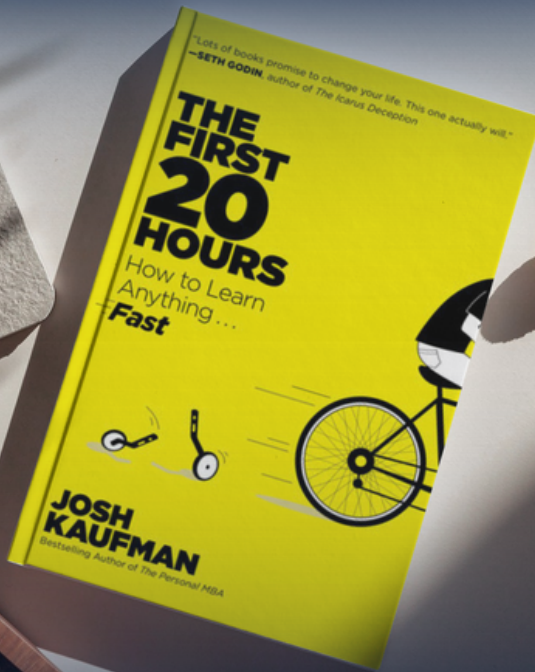
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## Foreword

Asalamu Alaikum wrb - Peace and Blessings be upon you!

"Dear young learners! We all have big dreams and many fascinating things we want to explore and master. However, sometimes, it can be a bit tricky to figure out where to begin. To help you in such situations, we have written an interesting story for you. It is based on an incredible book called 'The First 20 Hours.' This book reveals a straightforward method for learning anything quickly and effectively! We hope you'll enjoy this story and discover some valuable tips along the way."

Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf, Perth





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# 1. A World of Dreams

The school playground buzzed with youthful energy under the blazing sun in Perth. In the midst of the student crowd, Aimen and Javeria, two inseparable friends, discovered comfort on a weathered bench. They were more than classmates - they were like-minded souls, with dreams that reached far beyond what the eye could see.

From that bench, they could see the basketball court where their classmates were engrossed in some impressive moves. Aimen contemplated for a moment and then said, "How did they learn all this? Should we give it a try too?" She quickly reconsidered, saying, "Nah, I have other dreams and aspirations that require my time." Javeria, always friendly, smiled in understanding and nodded, their eyes conveying a shared secret. "You read my mind, Aimen. While they concentrate on layups, we have different ambitions."



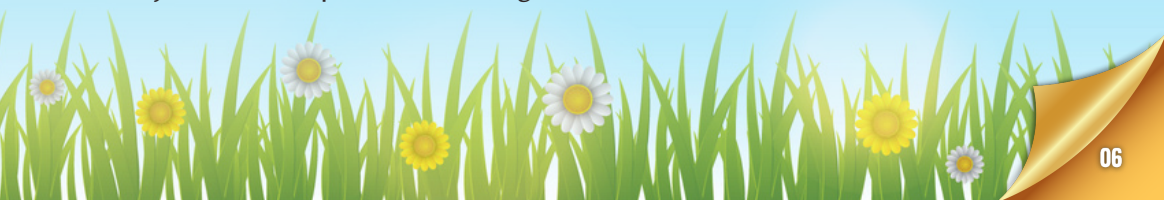




Considering the closeness of this topic to their hearts, they delved into a heartfelt discussion. Aimen, gazing into the distance, shared her deepest thoughts. "Javeria, reciting the Quran has always deeply moved me. But one barrier I face is understanding Arabic." In Aimen's family, the Quran held a place of deep reverence, but its meanings remained an enigma. Aimen longed to unveil the hidden wisdom within those wonderful words. She couldn't help but admire the scholars of their community who had mastered Arabic language, making the Quran's treasures accessible to all. She wanted to be like them in terms of her understanding of the Quran and in terms of being able to help her community.

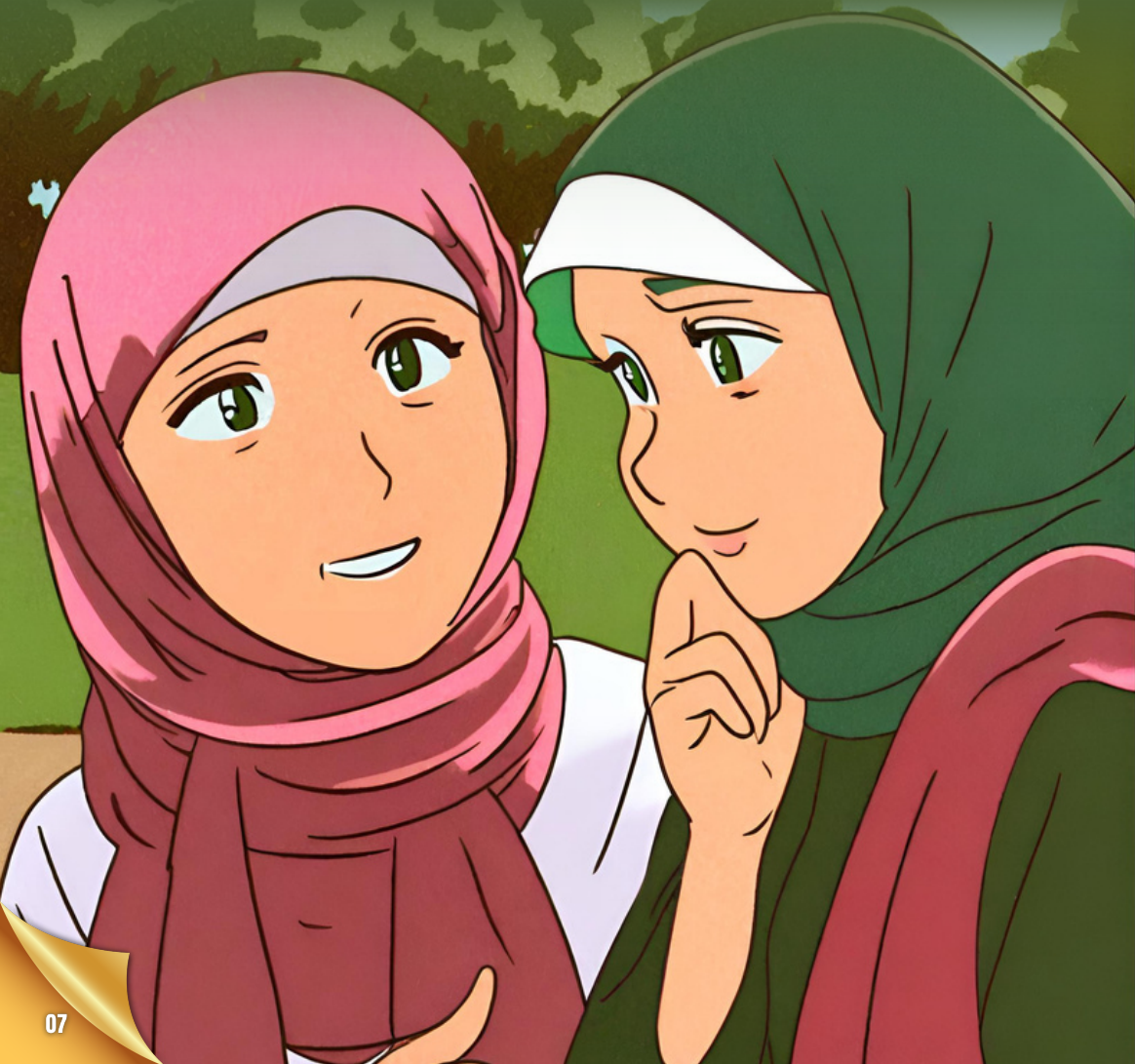
Javeria leaned closer, her curiosity piqued. "As for me, Aimen, I'm drawn to graphic design; this will be my way of serving the community. Just look around; the world is evolving at lightning speed, yet it seems like we are missing out. Take those event posters on the noticeboard, for example. They're often cryptic, overloaded with information, or suffering from poor color choices." Her eyes gleamed with passion. "I want to empower our community with this vital skill. Remember those illustrated books by iCAN Sama-O-Basr? These books are very well-designed alhamdulillah. I want to craft something equally captivating."

As the sun dipped lower, painting the world in shades of orange and pink, their conversation took a practical turn. Aimen pondered, "They say it takes 10,000 hours to master a skill." The sheer magnitude of that number hit them, and their laughter began to resonate across the playground. Javeria chuckled, "We'd be gray and wrinkled before reaching that milestone." Aimen nodded, her smile fading, determination shining in her eyes. "There must be a more efficient way, a smarter path to learning a skill."



In harmony, they explored various possibilities, their enthusiasm growing with each idea. Finally, they hatched a plan. Aimen's smile was infectious. "Let's venture to that famous second-hand bookstore in Fremantle, in search of the guide to our dreams."

Javeria wholeheartedly agreed, and together they set a goal. By pooling their pocket money, they'd save every penny, knowing that the book they sought would become their guiding star, leading them toward their cherished aspirations. The sun had nearly vanished beyond the horizon, but their dreams burned brighter than ever.




## 2. The Quest Begins

Aimen and Javeria had embarked on a mission that filled their days with anticipation and determination. They diligently saved every bit of their pocket money until their shared treasure grew large enough to buy the key to their dreams – a book. When the moment finally arrived, they couldn't contain their excitement. Spotting each other in the school playground, they exchanged triumphant high-fives. The day they had eagerly awaited had finally arrived; they could finally purchase the book that they hoped would pave their path to acquiring the skills they aspired to learn.

As the weekend dawned, they set out for Fremantle, a historic town known for its charm and a second-hand bookstore that held a legendary reputation for its extensive collection. Their hearts brimmed with eagerness as they looked ahead to the adventure unfolding before them. By 10 AM, they had arrived at their destination, and the charming exterior of the store invited them to step in.







Upon entering, they were greeted by towering shelves that seemed to stretch toward the sky. The bookstore was a labyrinth of knowledge, featuring sections spanning history, fiction, science, engineering, self-help, psychology, mental health, animated books, and even culinary delights. Overwhelmed by the sheer volume of books, they exchanged uncertain glances. Where would they find the treasure they sought? Feeling overwhelmed, they sought guidance from the wise store owner, who directed them to the self-help section. Their search led them to titles like "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" and books by Dale Carnegie. While these looked like great books, none offered the specific guidance they needed. Just as disappointment threatened to overshadow their excitement, Aimen's keen eyes spotted a book titled 'The First 20 Hours.' She pointed it out to Javeria, and they eagerly flipped through its pages, ensuring it aligned with their objectives.

Within the first chapter, they discovered a revelation that mirrored their conversation on the school playground – the notion of requiring 10,000 hours to master a skill. Their intrigue grew as they read this. The author challenged the conventional wisdom and proposed a far swifter method for acquiring skills. A shared smile passed between them; they knew they had finally found their guide.

With hearts full of hope, they returned to the shop owner, paid for the book, and clutched it with joy. Javeria couldn't resist the temptation and suggested, "Aimen, how about we head to the Fremantle boat harbor and enjoy some fish and chips while reading the first chapter of our newfound treasure?" Aimen's eyes lit up with enthusiasm as she agreed, "Fish and chips sound perfect, Javeria. Let's savor the start of our journey."




### 3. An Oath by the Sea

The sun began its descent, casting a warm, golden glow over the Fremantle boat harbor. Aimen and Javeria enjoyed the soft ocean breeze and the unique smell of the sea that filled the air. Seagulls swooped and played in the sky above, while beneath the wooden deck, graceful jellyfish danced through the clear waters. Settling onto the wooden deck, their anticipation matched only by the serenity of their surroundings, they ordered the iconic fish and chips. It wasn't just a meal; it was a feast to celebrate the beginning of their journey. As their plates arrived, they opened the book to chapter one, their eager eyes scanning the words together.

Within the pages of the chapter, they discovered the truth about the 10,000 hours. The author stressed that while mastery might seem like an endless journey of up to 10,000 hours, the first 20 hours of deliberate practice were sufficient to achieve rapid improvement in a new skill. During this timeframe, a person could attain a reasonable level of proficiency. A wave of excitement engulfed them. Aimen remarked, "That means we can acquire these skills before our hair turns gray." Laughter filled the air between them.





Their eyes darted back to the text, where the author made a distinction between physical skills and knowledge-based skills. While mastering physical skills, such as becoming NBA players, could be an arduous journey, knowledge-based skills, like graphic design and language learning, held the promise of rapid acquisition. Grateful for their choice of not becoming the NBA players, they shared another hearty laugh. Aimen and Javeria's excitement reached new heights as they realized their chosen skills fit seamlessly into this framework. Graphic design and Arabic language would be their canvas for the next adventure.

Their reading journey continued, unveiling three key barriers to learning a skill: lack of time, lack of ability, and lack of interest. The girls deliberated on their chosen paths. Aimen expressed concern about the time constraints with their busy schedules, including iCAN's Quran Circles and sports activities. She suggested, "Should we consider skipping Quran Circles?" Javeria defended the value of Quran Circles. "Aimen, these circles have molded us into who we are today. They've enriched our personalities. We can't forsake them. And sports activities are important too." Aimen nodded, agreeing with Javeria's point. "Absolutely, Javeria. So, how do we go about making this plan a reality?" they pondered. After some thought, they came up with a solution: dedicating a specific time each day, after Fajr prayers, to pursue their learning goals.

With determination, Aimen stressed, "This early morning time is when we are most focused and productive." Javeria's face lit up with a smile, but she added playfully, "Well, if only we weren't distracted by social media and other things that keep us awake at night!" They shared a laugh, shaking their heads in agreement. Javeria then suggested, "Yes, let's make it a commitment to spend one hour learning after Fajr."

My father mentioned a hadith to me once that speaks about the blessings during this time. Let's strive for that blessings to lead us toward accomplishing our goals." Javeria nodded in agreement, shaking hands as a pact of commitment. "One problem solved," Aimen smiled.

The conversation then shifted to the final two barriers they faced: lack of ability and lack of interest. Aimen posed the question, "Do we really lack ability and interest?" They exchanged a glance, sharing a brief moment of contemplative silence before erupting into laughter, their heads shaking in unison. "Certainly not!" they declared with unwavering confidence. Aimen proudly shared her father's faith in her abilities, affectionately calling herself his "supergirl." Javeria seamlessly joined in, affirming her own unwavering passion for graphic design and her confidence in her capabilities. She added, "All girls are supergirls in many ways, and all boys are superboys in many ways. Allah has made each of us special in our own unique ways and given us special talents."



As they delved further into the book, they soon realized that it placed a strong emphasis on the importance of focusing on one skill at a time. This realization left them feeling somewhat concerned because they harbored other interests as well. Aimen had a deep desire to learn calligraphy, while Javeria aspired to master the art of photography. They contemplated the author's words and ultimately concluded that the right approach would indeed be to concentrate on one skill at a time. They acknowledged that they shouldn't spread themselves too thin, and that they could pursue those other skills at a later point. For now, they decided to focus on what they valued most.

Feeling inspired, they made a heartfelt promise to each other - Aimen would devote herself to mastering the Arabic language, while Javeria would immerse herself wholeheartedly in the captivating world of graphic design.

With their plates now empty and hearts full, they embraced each other, sealing their pact. "I'm all fired up," Aimen exclaimed, and they made their way to the bus stop, ready to tackle their newfound dreams.

They decided to meet once more in the school playground after the day's lessons on Monday, where the pages of their book awaited them, brimming with the promise of knowledge and the adventure of skill acquisition.







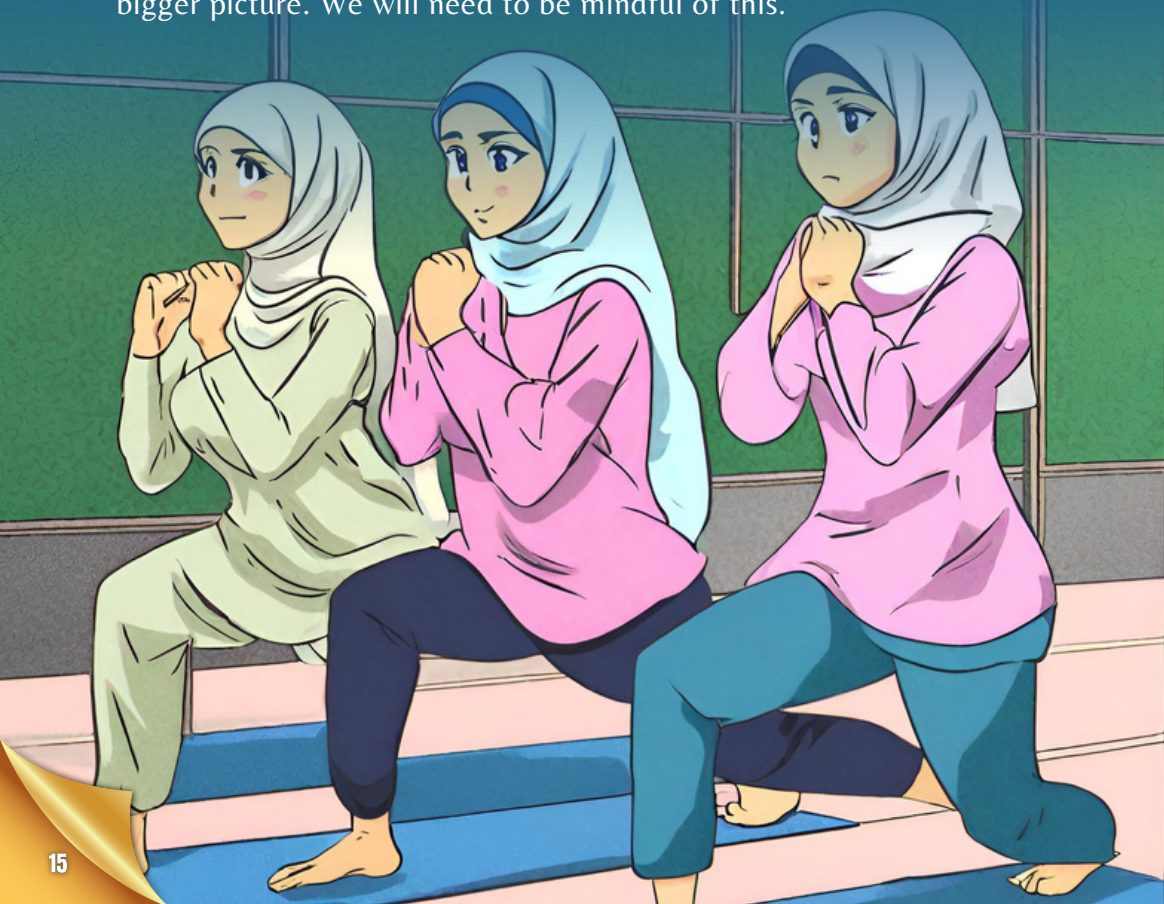
## 4. From Mountains to Morsels


On that bright Monday morning, Aimen and Javeria's minds were consumed by the path that lay ahead of them as they made their way to school. As their school day progressed, they eagerly anticipated their post-school meeting, a time they had come to cherish as the gateway to their dreams. When the gentle melody of the school bell echoed through the corridors, signaling the end of classes, the two friends hastened towards the playground, exchanging warm greetings along the way. Finally reaching the familiar old bench, a silent witness to countless conversations and dreams throughout the years, Aimen and Javeria knew in their hearts that it would witness something special today. Their discussion carried the promise of an extraordinary journey. With their book in hand, they flipped open to chapter two, ready to immerse themselves in a world of fresh ideas and illuminating concepts.

Their reading journey began with a profound insight from the author: "Begin With the End in Mind." This concept emphasized the importance of envisioning the desired outcome and understanding what success would look like. The goal of the 20-hour approach was not to become a master of the chosen skill. Instead, it aimed to establish a strong foundation that would enable the ability to practice and self-correct effectively. To accomplish this, the next step involved breaking down the ultimate objective into manageable components. Aimen shared a personal anecdote that perfectly exemplified this concept. She recounted her mother's weight loss journey. Initially feeling demotivated by the daunting task of shedding 20 kilograms, her mother sought guidance. With the support of her family, she shifted her perspective. Instead of solely fixating on the end goal, they encouraged her to celebrate smaller victories along the way.

Setting a weekly goal of losing 1 kilogram, her mother experienced remarkable progress. This strategic approach transformed her into a healthier and happier individual. Aimen explained that her mother had meticulously deconstructed her goal, addressing key aspects like diet, exercise, and sleep. She even joined a fitness group. By mastering the fundamentals, she achieved her objective.

Inspired by this revelation, Javeria eagerly suggested, "Aimen, we can adopt this principle for our dreams as well. Let's start by clearly defining what we want to achieve and then break down our pursuits into smaller, more manageable tasks. This will help us prioritize and focus on the essential elements." Aimen nodded emphatically, emphasizing an important point, "Absolutely right. When learning a skill, we often get overwhelmed with details and lose sight of the bigger picture. We will need to be mindful of this."





"We might get too caught up in unimportant details and miss out on the most important parts. We won't make this mistake. Instead, we'll identify the key components of what we want to learn and focus on those parts where even a little practice can make a big difference in our skills. It's like building the skeleton before adding the muscles and skin." Javeria's eyes sparkled with understanding. They both nodded in agreement, but Aimen had a question, "But how will I know which parts are essential when it comes to learning Arabic? I'm not familiar with the language."

With a comforting smile, Javeria leaned in and said, "Don't worry, Aimen. I have an idea. We can use the internet to find out what we need, to learn the skills we chose. I'll search for information on graphic design, and you can look into learning Arabic. There are plenty of books, YouTube videos, and experts online who can help us. We can ask them for advice and save time while we're learning." Aimen's face lit up with excitement. "That's a great plan, Javeria. Tomorrow, we'll focus on researching and gathering the foundations for our dreams." They shook hands, sealing their agreement, and watched as the sun set, painting their dreams in beautiful shades of gold.





## 5. Guided by Wisdom

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Aimen's determination burned brightly. That evening, she made the decision to seek the guidance of Mrs. Talat Nasir Malik, a respected scholar of the Arabic language in their community. With curiosity and hope filling her heart, Aimen arrived at Mrs. Malik's house at the scheduled time.

Mrs. Malik, a wise and experienced teacher, greeted Aimen warmly. She then proceeded to offer valuable advice to Aimen, emphasizing the importance of building a solid foundation before aiming to become a master in Arabic. She suggested utilizing available resources, such as courses, books, or tutors, to grasp the basics without getting overwhelmed by advanced details. Mrs. Malik recommended breaking down the language into four fundamental parts - Nouns, Nominal Sentences, Verbs, and Verbal Sentences - as the sequence of study. She explained that focusing on practicing the core rules related to these aspects, rather than delving too deeply into exceptions at the beginning, would lead to more efficient progress. Aimen couldn't contain her smile as Mrs. Malik's advice perfectly aligned with what she had read in 'The First 20 Hours'. Curious for more information, Aimen asked Mrs. Malik if there were any books or courses that followed this approach.

Mrs. Malik responded with warmth, "Yes, dear, there are indeed. One such course is by Shaykh Amir Suhail, titled 'Lisan ul Quran.' It's based on years of research and has evolved through multiple iterations. You can find it both in book form and as YouTube videos."

Aimen's curiosity kept growing, leading her to ask another question, "Can someone truly learn a skill in only 20 hours? The book I've been reading, 'The First 20 Hours,' talks about fast skill acquisition. However, 20 hours seems too brief? Is it really possible?"

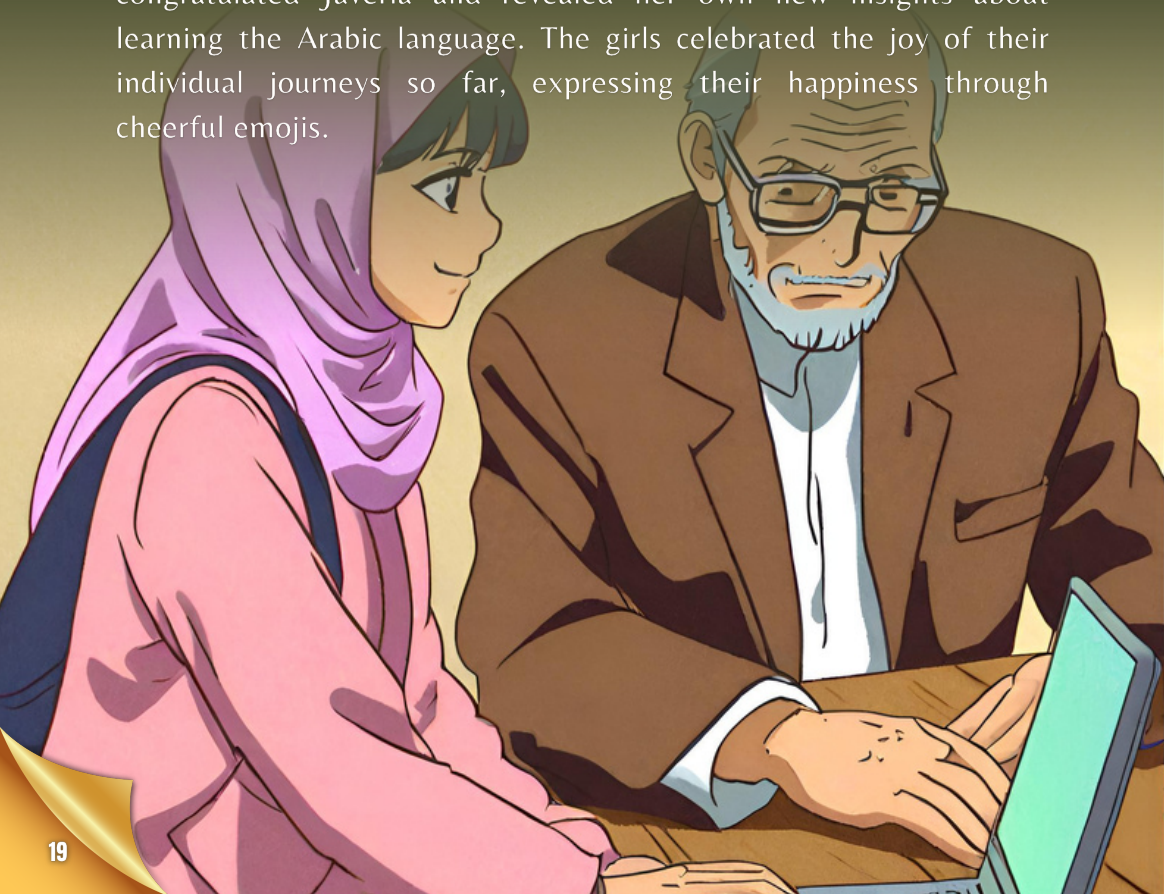


Mrs. Malik explained that it is indeed possible to reach a reasonable level of Arabic comprehension in just 20 hours. She mentioned how people witness significant progress if they follow the right learning approach during those initial 20 hours. Those first hours are crucial, and as long as one doesn't give up, they can experience rapid improvement. Mrs. Malik shared with Aimen that even her father too learned Arabic in just 20 hours through the Lisan-ul-Quran course by Shaykh Amir Suhail. Aimen was surprised to hear that her father also completed the course in 20 hours and even progressed to higher levels of Quranic Arabic. She jokingly said that her father owes her a pack of cookies for keeping this opportunity a secret. They both shared a warm smile as they ended their conversation. Aimen left Mrs. Malik's home feeling grateful in her heart.



Meanwhile, Javeria began her exploration of graphic design with the guidance of her experienced uncle, Tauseef. Tauseef directed Javeria's attention toward four key areas of study. The first was character design, where she would learn the art of layering and creating captivating masterpieces. Secondly, he suggested she dive into the world of color combinations, discovering how colors interact and create harmony in designs. Thirdly, he guided her to focus on aspect ratios, unlocking the transformative power of proportions. Javeria eagerly anticipated immersing herself in these studies, recognizing their potential to fuel her artistic growth.

Brimming with excitement over their newfound insights, Javeria couldn't wait to share her incredible progress in breaking down her journey into Graphic Design with Aimen. Aimen, in turn, congratulated Javeria and revealed her own new insights about learning the Arabic language. The girls celebrated the joy of their individual journeys so far, expressing their happiness through cheerful emojis.





## 6. Leaping beyond Barriers

The next evening, Aimen didn't show up at their usual meeting time. Javeria, concerned, took a quick round of the playground, hoping to find Aimen but she was nowhere in sight. Javeria considered texting her but then saw Aimen entering from the other end, wearing an elegantly wrapped scarf. Relief washed over Javeria as she saw her friend. Curious, Javeria asked what had happened.

Aimen shared with Javeria that she couldn't pray her Zuhr prayer during school hours, so she performed it after school. Smiling, Javeria responded, "Alhamdulillah, I consider myself fortunate to have a friend like you who never neglects her prayers. It's truly wonderful how we can remind each other of doing good and protect one another from slipping." Aimen wholeheartedly agreed, saying, "This is the most beautiful reward of having good friends!"

"Shall we get started then?" Javeria asked. "Absolutely," Aimen replied, taking her friend's hand and leading her toward the bench. "It's great that both of us have identified the aspects we will focus on during our journey to learn the skills we're passionate about," Javeria remarked. "Alhamdulillah, it's a fantastic early win. Our next task is to overcome the barriers to learning." "Barriers?" Javeria wondered. "Yes, I took a sneak peek further into the book, and I noticed that the author suggests removing barriers to learning, which includes identifying common obstacles or challenges that hinder progress. By identifying and addressing these barriers early on, it becomes easier to focus on the essential subskills that will lead to rapid improvement," Aimen explained.

Having carefully listened to the requirements, Javeria thoughtfully suggested a way forward to Aimen, "Alright, let's brainstorm to identify the potential obstacles that may hinder our learning."



"Hmm, I think I'll do better if I jot down my reflections on paper rather than thinking on the go," Aimen suggested. "Great idea," Javeria affirmed. Both girls opened their diaries and began listing the barriers they might encounter on their learning journey. Aimen came up with the following list:

#### *Emotional Barriers:*

*Perception that the task is too big or difficult. Lack of motivation or feeling of inadequacy. Boredom during the learning process. Procrastination. Difficulty in setting priorities.*

#### *Physical Barriers:*

*Inconvenient location of the class. Limited access to printed materials (books). Lack of access to Lisan ul Quran lectures. Geographic distance or travel constraints.*

#### *Personal Barriers:*

*Time management issues. Challenges with self-guided learning. Dependence on group learning for motivation (inability to remain motivated by myself).*

#### *Methodological Barriers:*

*Incompatibility between the teaching method and the learner's preferences or style (Dad told me that there are many techniques that don't work; people just put whatever on youtube) : (*

Reading through Aimen's points, Javeria said, "This is an excellent list, Aimen. How did you compile all this?"

Aimen gave a cheeky smile and replied, "I had a detailed discussion with my father last night about his own journey of learning Arabic. I just recalled that discussion and listed the key points."

"Great. It's certainly important to learn from those who have embarked on the same journey before. Wanna have a look at my list?" Javeria asked, sliding her diary in front of Aimen. Her diary contained the following list of barriers to learning graphic design:



#### Emotional Barriers:

Self-doubt about creative abilities;  
Fear of not meeting high design standards;  
Hesitation in sharing work due to fear of criticism



#### Technical Barriers:

Limited access to necessary software and tools;  
Insufficient knowledge of graphic design software; Inadequate understanding of design principles and techniques.



#### Personal Barriers:

Inability to allocate sufficient time for practice and learning; Lack of constructive feedback or critique from experienced designers.

#### Methodological Barriers:

Starting with advanced tools and then getting confused about so many features that they offer

Aimen carefully reviewed each of Javeria's points, nodding in agreement as she did so. She then shared her insights, saying, "You've certainly put a lot of thought into this. I can see a common theme in what you and I have come up with." Curious, Javeria asked, "What did you notice?" Aimen explained further, "It appears that our primary obstacle in acquiring these skills isn't intellectual; it's more of an emotional challenge." Wholeheartedly agreeing, Javeria responded, "I couldn't agree more. We should definitely keep this in mind as we plan our next steps."

Aimen then inquired, "So, what do you think our next steps should be?" Javeria suggested, "Let's focus on finding solutions to these hurdles." "In order to overcome Emotional barriers, I believe we should follow the concept of 'flow' as explained by the author. We should gradually increase the difficulty level of the tasks we take on. We should start with simpler tasks that provide us with a reasonable level of challenge for our current skill level, without overwhelming us," Aimen proposed.

“As we progress, we can increase the complexity. If we aim for perfection from the beginning, we might lose confidence in our abilities,” she added. “I fully agree. This approach will help eliminate the perception that the task is too big or difficult. It will also allow us to achieve quick wins and remain motivated,” Javeria concurred.

She continued, “You also listed 'boredom.' How would that happen, Aimen?” Javeria asked. “I think that happens when one does not have interest in a subject. We should keep watching videos that highlight the importance of what we are learning and attend lectures that reinforce the same. Our 'why' has to be very clear to us. If that 'why' is clear, we will not procrastinate, and we will be able to prioritize our learning,” Aimen clarified.





She continued, "In order to overcome physical barriers, I will attend the classes along with my dad. He plans on retaking the course to refresh his knowledge." Javeria interrupted her with laughter. "So that means you will always be the first one to arrive in class." Aimen joined in the laughter. "Yes, it seems like that will be the case." She then added, "As for the book, I will borrow it from Ummul Qura Library." Javeria nodded in agreement. "That library is a lifesaver." Both of them smiled.

"How about you, Javeria? How will you overcome the technical difficulties?" "In terms of software, I am planning to use Canva. I have played with it a little bit, and a lot can be done with it. It is no longer just a poster-making tool. One can even create AI images on it and more. I intend to use Canva. The great thing about it is that a lot of training materials for this are available on YouTube. That would remove many barriers for me." "Good thinking," Aimen acknowledged. "I will send my work to Tauseef uncle for review and feedback. His feedback would really help me," Javeria added.



“It seems as if the above actions will remove most of the barriers. One thing that still remains, however, are personal management-related barriers. How can we push ourselves to learn?” Aimen reflected. Javeria responded, “In terms of that, we can do a few things. Firstly, as we decided that we will spend one hour on learning after Fajr, it is a great thing. Having a fixed time always helps with consistency. Secondly, we can make ourselves accountable for learning. We can use daily checklists. Plus, you can ask me about what I have learned, and I will ask you.” Aimen said, “Are you sure you want me to do that? I am pretty strict!” she giggled. Javeria said, “Yes, Ma’am, I am happy for my strict teacher to do that for me.” Both the girls laughed and started putting their diaries in their bags. It was time to go home. The next day was a public holiday. They decided to meet early and ponder over chapter 3 of the book.




## 7. Navigating to Learning Excellence

"Knock, knock." It must be Aimen. Javeria hurried to open the door, and there stood her friend Aimen with a broad smile on her face. "Assalam o Alaikum, Javeria. How is your morning?" Aimen asked in a genuinely amiable tone. "I am doing great, fully excited to continue our journey. Come in," Javeria replied warmly.

As the girls entered the house, Javeria's mother emerged from the kitchen. Aimen greeted her, and she responded with a friendly smile, patting Aimen's head.








"Come, girls. I have prepared something special for you – Carrot Halwa, yummmm," Javeria's mother announced. Aimen informed her that she had already taken breakfast, but she insisted on her trying the delicious treat that she prepared especially for her. "Our moms love to cook!" Javeria whispered in Aimen's ear with a smile. Aimen nodded in agreement. "And they love to see us enjoy their food. But I love it because it's filled with warmth. Affection is the most precious thing in life," she added. Javeria nodded, and both girls savored the carrot halwa while chatting about various topics, from school to sports and beyond. After finishing their treat, they headed to the study room to delve into the next chapter of their book.

Settled in the study room with their diaries open and pens at the ready, the girls were eager to embark on the next phase of their learning journey—creating a plan to implement effective learning techniques.

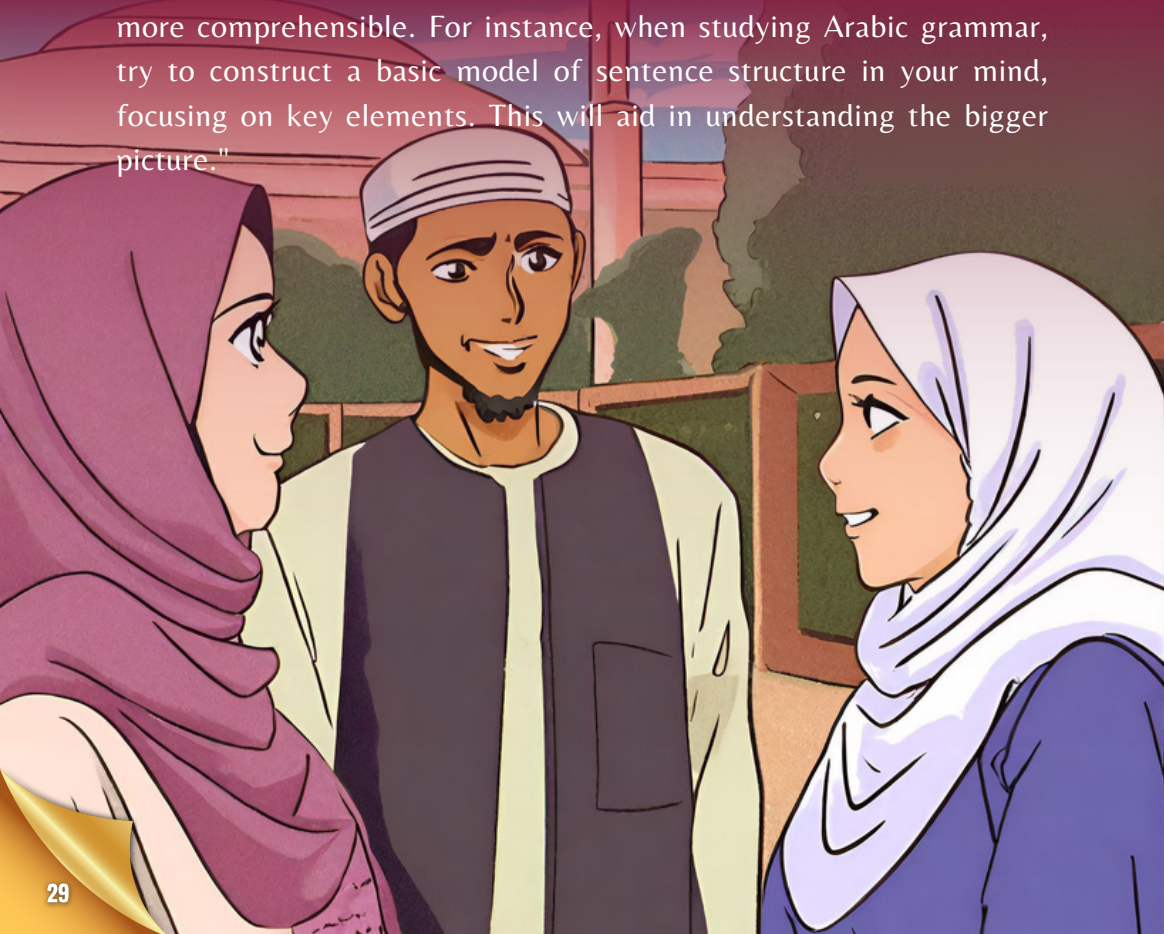
Aimen, filled with anticipation, turned to Javeria and exclaimed, "Javeria, this chapter from 'The First 20 Hours' is invaluable! It's all about practical principles for effective learning. Let's dive into them and see how they can help us." Javeria responded with curiosity, "Yes, I can sense your enthusiasm. Honestly, I'm just as thrilled. If we can master these principles, we'll be on our way to success. Let's begin with these principles." Aimen smiled and said, "Let's start with the first one: 'Research the Skill and Related Topics.' I believe it's about understanding the fundamentals of our skills. Alhamdolillah, we seem to have already started on this path. At this stage, we should benefit from carefully chosen courses, books, or tutorials without going overboard. We'll focus on the key components we identified earlier." Javeria agreed, "That's true, Aimen. I've also done some research on graphic design. I think we're on the right track." Both girls began jotting down notes from their previous research and the new information they gathered.



Aimen continued, "Good, so it seems we're making progress with point 1. Let's move on to the next point. In this, the author suggests that we should challenge ourselves at the right time and with the right amount. Too much challenge can be detrimental, but the right amount can be beneficial. Let's start with the simpler aspects of our skills and gradually progress. My dad told me that when he was learning Arabic, pondering over Quranic ayat to apply the grammatical rules he had studied was incredibly helpful. If he encountered ayat he didn't fully understand, it pushed him to challenge himself. In many cases, his passion made him spend hours studying aspects that would enable him to comprehend those ayat. This approach worked really well for him." Javeria, filled with confidence, responded with a smile, "Thanks, I'll keep that in mind. I'll apply it by experimenting with basic design elements and then gradually tackle more complex projects. I think I can start with very simple Facebook post designs and then work my way up to more advanced levels. To challenge myself, I'll continuously review artwork created by others and see if I can replicate it with my own skillset. If not, I'll explore what I need to learn to achieve that." Aimen nodded in agreement. "That's a great way of thinking," she concurred.



Aimen, looking slightly puzzled while reading the next point, said, "The upcoming point is about 'Identify Mental Models and Mental Hooks.' I find it a bit confusing." Javeria, feeling confident, suggested, "Let's seek guidance from my dad. He can help us understand this." "Good idea," agreed Aimen. They approached Javeria's father, Uncle Muneeb, who was a life coach. Aimen initiated the conversation, saying, "Uncle Muneeb, we're struggling to comprehend a concept. Could you assist us in understanding it?" Javeria's father took a look at the pages Aimen had brought and quickly grasped the author's intention. He began explaining, "It's an intriguing point. A mental model is a simplified representation of how something works. Since it's impossible to hold all the details of the world in our brains, we employ models to make complex things more comprehensible. For instance, when studying Arabic grammar, try to construct a basic model of sentence structure in your mind, focusing on key elements. This will aid in understanding the bigger picture."





Turning to Javeria, he continued, "The same principle applies to graphic design. You can identify the crucial components that make up a graphic design and mentally visualize their interactions. These components could include graphic objects, colors, layouts, proportions, and so on. Does this concept resonate with both of you?" "Yes, Uncle," they replied, now with greater clarity. Javeria then inquired, "Could you also explain what mental hooks are?" Uncle Muneeb affectionately patted Javeria's head and said, "Certainly, my dear daughter. Mental hooks are techniques of association. For instance, people often create acronyms to aid in memory retention. Instead of trying to recall long sentences or phrases, they remember acronyms and associate the letters with what they want to remember. For example, when we say that objectives should be SMART, we mean they should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. This helps in easily recalling and understanding the key aspects of the concept."



Similarly, certain symbols have specific meanings. Javeria, remember what it signifies in cricket when the umpire raises both arms?" Javeria replied, "Yes, Papa, it means the batsman scored six runs." "Exactly," Uncle Muneeb confirmed. "That's a mental hook. Create such hooks for yourselves to enhance learning." Both girls exchanged relieved glances, satisfied with the clarity they had gained. They expressed their gratitude to Uncle Muneeb for his guidance before returning to the study room, eager to continue their in-depth exploration of the learning materials.

Seated on bean bags in the study room, they resumed their studies. Javeria, with a pensive tone, asked, "Aimen, the next point is intriguing: 'Imagine the Opposite of What You Want.' What does it mean?" Aimen responded, "I think it means envisioning what it would be like if we fail to acquire the skills we want to learn. For me, that would mean never mastering Arabic and missing out on the beauty of the Quran. Oh no, I would never want this to happen! I want to learn the language of the Quran to be with my father on the day of judgement. My dad wishes to see Prophet Muhammad ﷺ at Al-Kauther smiling to see him come and saying, 'Come O righteous slave! I bestow my love to you.' He longs to drink from his blessed hands. I want to be there with with my father in that moment too. I want the Prophet ﷺ to acknowledge me too I dedicated my life in his love. I want to present my understanding of the Arabic language and the Quran to Syeduna Rasool Allah ﷺ there."

Aimen began to cry profusely as she expressed her feelings. Javeria hugged her tightly and wiped away her tears, saying, "In sha Allah, we will all be united in the service of our beloved Prophet ﷺ. I will serve the ummah through the field of graphic design. I will create content that inspires people to explore the beautiful religion of Islam. I can't even fathom not doing that." They held each other in a heartfelt embrace, lost in reflective thoughts for a moment.

After a few moments, when their emotions had settled, they resumed their studies. The topics of motivation, procrastination, and setting priorities came up in their discussion. Aimen mentioned a community activist named Sr. Maryam who gives lectures on these subjects. They both agreed to arrange a meeting with her. "I'm so grateful we have such brilliant minds in our community. Let's seek their advice and work towards our success, in sha Allah," Javeria exclaimed. Aimen's eyes were filled with gratitude as well.

Aimen continued, "The next point in the book emphasizes eliminating distractions and having a dedicated workspace." "That's true. We should sit in a quiet and conducive environment, free of distractions, to learn effectively. I'll turn off notifications on my computer and put my phone on silent to fully immerse myself in graphic design," said Javeria. "I'll do the same," Aimen concurred.






Aimen turned the page and read, "Use Spaced Repetition and Reinforcement for Memorization." Javeria smiled and said, "It seems like we already anticipated what this book would cover. We agreed on our learning and practice times yesterday. Our planned morning routine, coupled with evening revision, will be beneficial for better information processing by the brain." Aimen nodded in agreement.

Aimen proceeded to the next point, "For 'Create Scaffolds and Checklists,' we can outline our learning plans." Javeria, with enthusiasm in her tone, added, "And create detailed checklists for our projects!" "Exactly. Let's work with our mentors to create a day-by-day learning plan. We'll identify what we need to learn based on the chunks we've identified and set a time frame for each task," Aimen suggested. "That will also help us with self and peer accountability," Javeria added. Aimen playfully chimed in, "Yes, I'm ready to hold you accountable," accompanied by a comical cat-like expression, leading to both girls bursting into laughter.

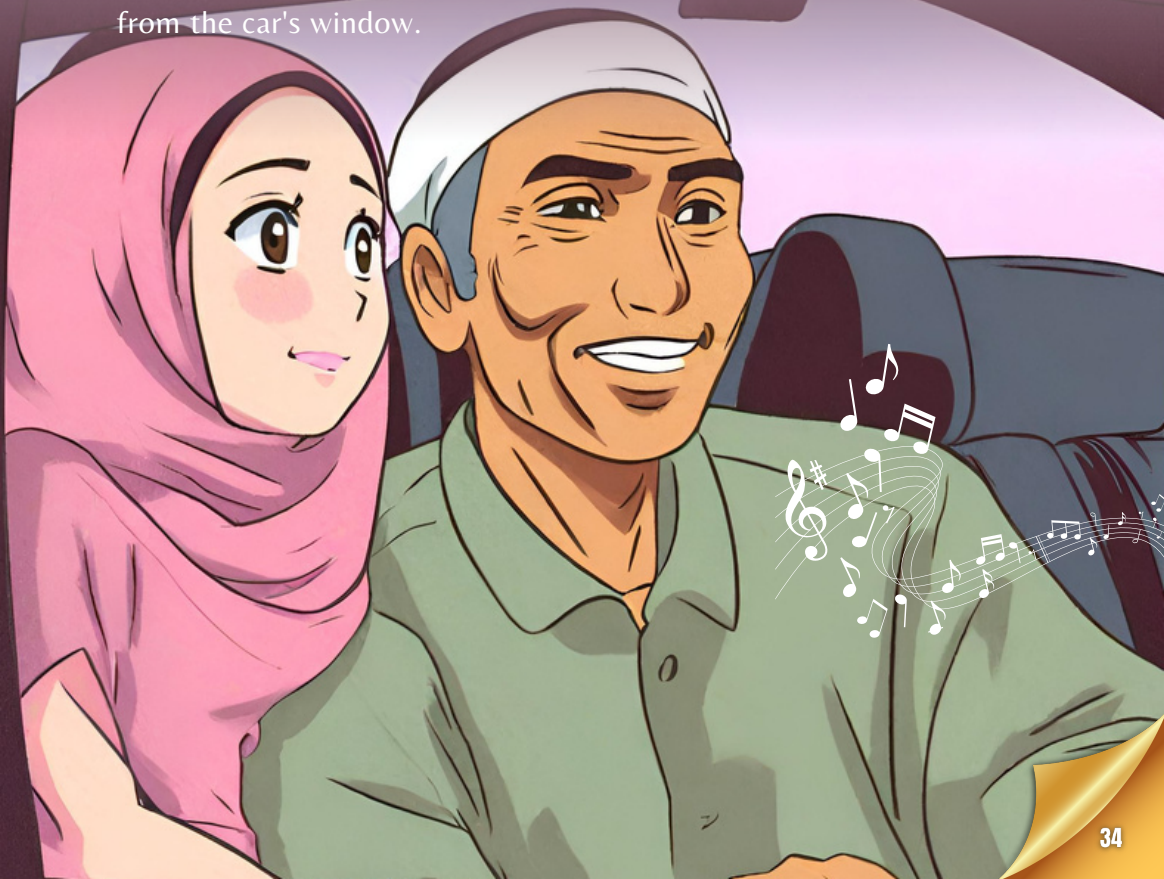
Aimen continued with a thoughtful tone, "Javeria, 'Make and Test Predictions' is fascinating. I can test my knowledge by forming sentences and predicting how the grammar would work. Then, I'll read the analysis and compare it with my predictions. It sounds like a fantastic way to enhance our learning." Javeria, with genuine excitement, agreed, "I love that idea, Aimen! It adds an analytical dimension to our learning."





Aimen then shared with a reflective tone, "And the final point! 'Honor Your Biology.' To me, it means we should listen to our bodies and minds and take breaks when needed." She closed the book with a relieved look on her face. "Alhamdulillah, we've covered a very important chapter today," Javeria remarked. While they were discussing this, the alarm clock in Javeria's room began playing the Adhan. Both girls performed ablution, offered their prayer, and made a heartfelt dua for their success.

By this time, Aimen's father had arrived to pick her up. She bid farewell to Javeria. Aimen's father was waiting in the car, playing Nasheeds loudly as he always did. "Dadddd! can you please lower the volume? I'm at my friend's place!" Aimen requested. "Of course," he replied, saluting with his hand as he lowered the volume. He kissed Aimen on the head, and the car drove off. Aimen waved to Javeria from the car's window.



## 8. Empowering wisdom


The following day, as the morning assembly came to an end, Aimen leaned in and whispered into Javeria's ear, "Don't forget, we're meeting Sr. Maryam at our house at 5pm. Ask Uncle Muneeb to drop you at our house. We've invited her for tea." Javeria grinned and gave her a thumbs up, happily nodding her head as she walked towards her classroom, leaving the assembly ground behind.

At 4:58 PM, just before time, the doorbell chimed. Aimen knew exactly who it was. She swung open the door and warmly welcomed Javeria. They headed to the living room, where Aimen's mother, Auntie Fatima, and Sr. Maryam were seated, savoring their cups of tea. Javeria exchanged greetings with everyone and settled into one of the plush couches. Sr. Maryam asked, "How are your parents, Javeria?". She happily responded, "They are well, Alhamdulillah."

The conversation flowed effortlessly as Sr. Maryam delved into the topic that had piqued the girls' curiosity. "You know," she began, "when we find ourselves unable to accomplish something, it usually boils down to two reasons: external or internal factors." Sr. Maryam explained that external excuses encompass circumstances or factors beyond our control. As an example, she mentioned a teacher failing to show up for an Arabic grammar class. "While such situations may be out of our hands in the short term, we can take steps to ensure better outcomes in the long run."

Javeria, intrigued, asked for guidance on effectively dealing with such situations. Sr. Maryam responded, "There are always possibilities and solutions waiting to be explored. It's about accepting responsibility for our actions, or inactions, and seeking ways to navigate around or overcome external obstacles. Don't hesitate to seek advice and support from others; reaching out is never a weakness."

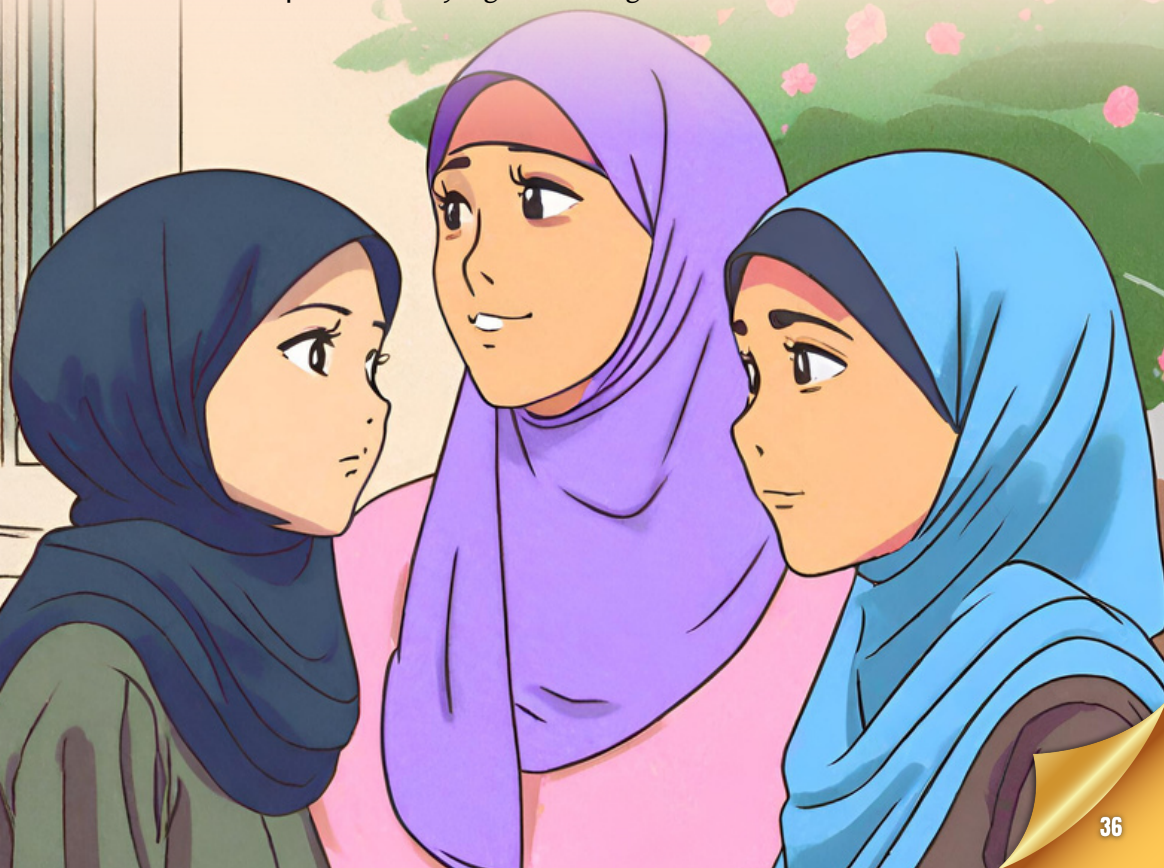





The room was buzzing with excitement as Aimen and Javeria discussed their aspirations to improve their chosen skills. They realized that to achieve their goals, they would need to look at things from different perspectives, take responsibility for their actions, and be willing to ask for help when needed.

They both felt ready for this journey of self-improvement. They were determined to unlock their hidden potential. They figured out that making excuses would only stop them from reaching their dreams.

Aimen got curious and asked Sister Maryam about another important thing: "internal excuses." Sister Maryam explained that these are like made-up rules we tell ourselves, saying we can't do something even when we can. Sometimes, we think we're not good enough because we messed up before or because others did. These thoughts hold us back and stop us from trying new things.





"Some even believe that if something has never been accomplished in the past, its attainment in the future is out of reach," Sr. Maryam explained. Eager to understand the root causes, Aimen inquired, "But why do people fall into this line of thinking, Sr. Maryam?" With wisdom, Sr. Maryam responded, "These excuses often stem from fears and doubts: fear of failure, fear of rejection, or fear of stepping out of one's comfort zone. Overcoming these excuses is essential to unlocking our true potential."

Captivated by their dialogue, Auntie Fatima, Aimen's mother, sought practical guidance from Sr. Maryam. Graciously accepting the request, Sr. Maryam then revealed an array of empowering strategies. "One powerful approach is to reframe negative thoughts into positive affirmations, while shifting our focus from problems to solutions," she began. Sr. Maryam emphasized the importance of transforming self-limiting statements such as "I can't do this" into affirmations of capability like "I am fully capable of handling this situation." By intentionally replacing negative self-talk with positive and empowering words, individuals can cultivate a mindset brimming with optimism and confidence. While it is natural to dwell on difficulties and negative aspects when faced with setbacks, Sr. Maryam cautioned against immobility and a victim mentality. Instead, she encouraged redirecting one's energy towards seeking viable solutions and practical steps to overcome challenges. This shift in mindset empowers individuals to view problems as opportunities for growth and to approach them with proactive determination.

Aimen and Javeria were learning what they needed to do and were determined to put it into practice. They were prepared to pursue their dreams with unwavering determination. By transforming negative thoughts into positive affirmations, they set out on a journey to cultivate a more empowering and hopeful state of mind.

Instead of becoming stuck on problems, they learned that success lies in embracing solutions, taking responsibility, unleashing hidden creativity, and actively seeking ways to overcome challenges. These practices were like powerful tools, promising to help shape their problem-solving and learning skills.

As Sr. Maryam continued to share her wisdom, she urged, "I implore you to maintain unwavering consistency in your actions, even when confronted with the most formidable of circumstances. In doing so, you shall forge an unstoppable momentum, breaking free from the shackles of excuses." Aimen and Javeria absorbed these transformative insights with unwavering focus, their hands deftly transcribing these gems onto the pages of their diaries.





As her words hung in the air, Sr. Maryam asked, "Do you understand better now? Does it make sense to you?" Both girls nodded, saying, "Definitely!" They thanked Sr. Maryam for her time. With these profound lessons resonating within them, the promise of something delightful drew near. Aimen's mother interrupted with a warm smile, saying, "If that's the case, then some tasty samosas are waiting for you." Everyone grinned and eagerly enjoyed the delicious samosas, their taste buds savoring not only the flavors but also the newfound wisdom that had graced their evening.



## 9. Cracking the Code

The weekend had finally arrived, and as the dawn broke, Javeria received an exciting SMS from her best friend. "Salam bestie, today my father is taking our family to Langley Park on the Swan River for a walk and BBQ. I know Uncle Muneeb likes walking along the river too. Can you join us there? We can knock out a number of chapters today. Let's take advantage of the weekend," the message read. Javeria's response was filled with enthusiasm, "Yaayyy, I am all excited now. Let's meet at the park." At 9 AM, Aimen and Javeria, accompanied by their families, arrived at the park. While the mothers set up a delightful BBQ, the fathers and brothers embarked on a scenic walk along the river. The two girls, driven by their shared passion for learning, took out their books and diaries and settled on the ground near the sizzling BBQ plate.





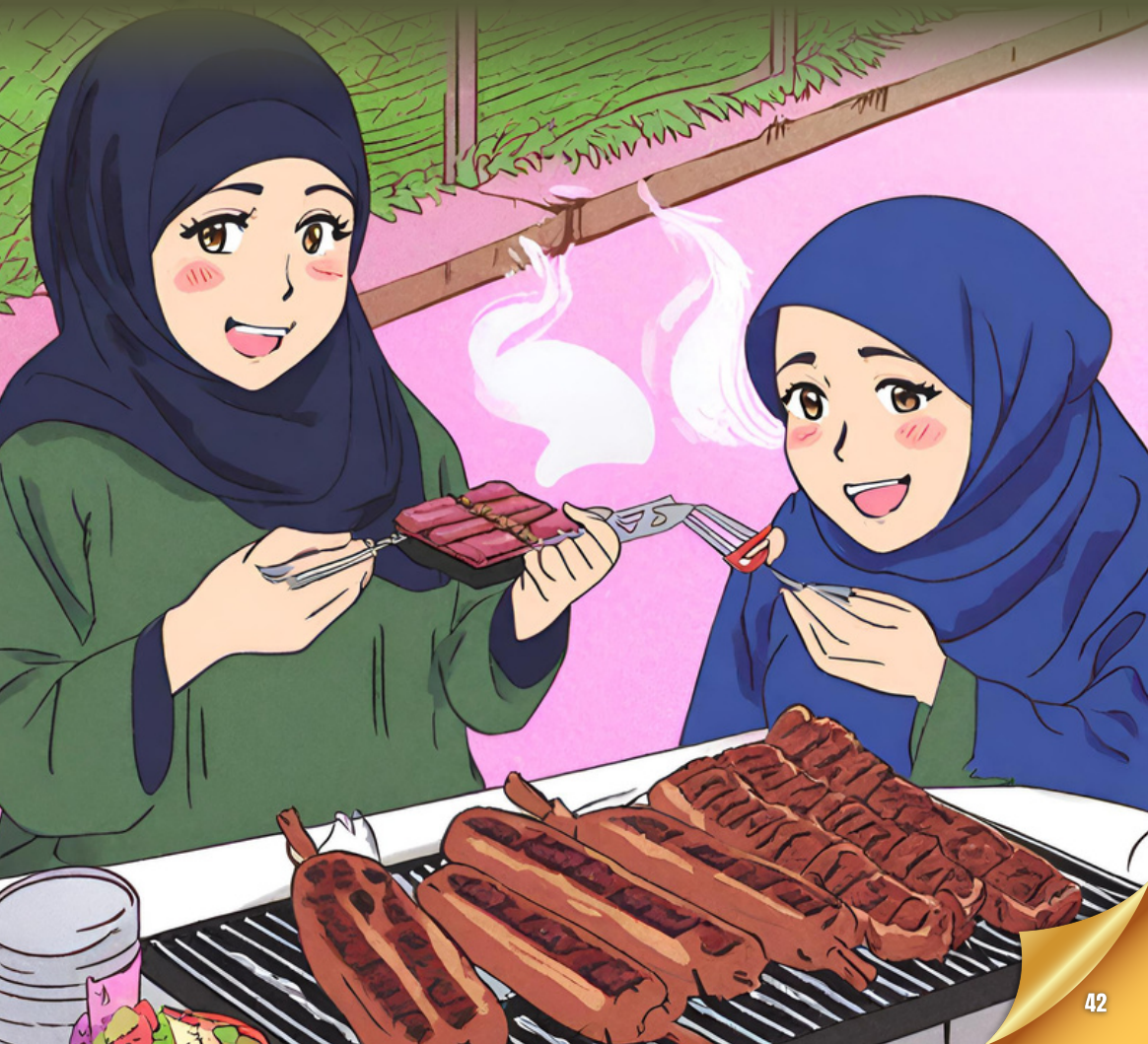
Aimen, with a thoughtful expression, began, "I had a quick look through the rest of the book. It seems as if most of the key contents are already covered, and the remaining chapters delve into the author's personal experiences in applying the strategies he's proposed in the book." Javeria nodded in agreement and suggested, "I see. How about we do a quick reading of the remaining chapters and then discuss and analyze them?" Aimen's eyes lit up as she responded, "An excellent idea! Let's do it. Both of us have developed quite the reading speed with all the books we've read over the years." Javeria couldn't help but smile, "True, my father joked the other day that if I keep buying and reading so many books, our house will soon be overrun by them." The girls shared a hearty smile.





Lost in their world of words, they hadn't even noticed Aimen's father calling them for lunch. "Girls, we've been calling you for a while now. What had you so engrossed?" he inquired. Aimen apologized, "Sorry, Dad. We were so deeply engrossed in our reading that time slipped away, and we didn't hear you calling us." Javeria chimed in, "We'll join you for the kebabs right away." With smiles all around, they gathered for lunch, their minds still filled with the wisdom they had gleaned from the book.

After their satisfying lunch, the girls decided to delve into a thoughtful analysis of the chapters they had just consumed.



Aimen initiated the discussion, curiosity dancing in her eyes, "So, how did you find these chapters?" Javeria, still mulling over the insights she had gained, responded, "I found them truly fascinating. It's astonishing how a seemingly simple process can be employed to acquire such a wide range of skills." Aimen, nodding in agreement, remarked, "Indeed, it's remarkable. What's even more intriguing is how consistently the author applied the four steps of rapid skill acquisition in each of his learning endeavors." Javeria grinned, recognizing the synchrony in their observations, and encouraged Aimen to share her insights first, asking, "Would you like to kick off our discussion with the first step?" Aimen eagerly obliged, her words flowing smoothly, "Certainly. The first step, 'Deconstructing a skill into the smallest possible sub-skills,' is quite evident. In Chapter 4, for example, as the author embarked on the journey of learning to program using Ruby, he meticulously deconstructed the art of programming into smaller, manageable sub-skills like testing, debugging, and problem-solving. This breakdown not only demystified the complex skill but also allowed him to focus on honing specific components."





Javeria, showcasing her own fascination with rapid skill acquisition, chimed in, "I've got an example as well, stemming from my love for fast typing, which I found in Chapter 10. Here, the author dissects touch typing into various essential components: rearranging the keyboard layout, developing the ability to type characters by touch, practicing typing sentences, and steadily elevating typing speed and accuracy. This structured approach helped him chart his progress effectively. By tackling each sub-skill individually, he could master them before experiencing their combined impact." Aimen leaned in, excitement in her voice, and added, "And if we look at the remaining chapters, we'll likely find similar patterns. But for now, shall we explore the second step?" Javeria responded enthusiastically, "Absolutely! Bring it on!"





Javeria continued the discussion, speaking with great enthusiasm, as they talked about the second step of fast skill learning. "Let's talk about the second step," she said. "It's about learning enough about each subskill to practice smartly and correct yourself while practicing. The goal of this step isn't to become a master right away. It's about starting and getting going. Continuing with our example of touch-typing, the author took on the challenge of learning touch typing with Colemak. He learnt the basics of this arrangement first and then made a bold move by changing the layout of his keyboard, switching to Colemak and saying goodbye to the familiar keys. This change helped him slowly get used to the new key positions through trial and error. As a result, he learned how to practice intelligently, without relying on looking at the keys, and instead correcting himself in real-time. It was a journey filled with quickly recognizing mistakes and fixing them right away. This shows that this approach really works."



Aimen, finding inspiration by the peaceful riverside, recalled how the author learned windsurfing. "In his journey of learning, he discovered a crucial skill in windsurfing—the art of positioning the sail correctly. To excel at it, he delved into comprehending the precise rules that dictate the sail's placement. He explored the interaction between the wind and the sail, how to adjust the sail angle based on the wind's direction, and how to maintain balance. With this solid foundation of understanding, the author could practice the skill and self-correct. He became adept at swiftly adjusting the sail's position as both the wind and his own balance changed. This continuous self-correction greatly enhanced his windsurfing abilities."






Aimen's transition to the third step of skill acquisition was seamless, her voice steeped in contemplation and insight. "Now, let's explore step 3," she continued, "which revolves around 'removing physical, mental, and emotional barriers that obstruct practice.' I have noted down an example from Chapter 9; in this example, the author delves into the challenges faced by novice Go players, grappling with the daunting specters of frustration and the fear of making errors. To liberate oneself from the emotional constraints, the author advocates embracing a 'beginner's mindset,' reimagining mistakes not as sources of frustration but as stepping stones teeming with learning opportunities."







Javeria nodded in agreement, her gaze steady and focused. She went on, "I've taken note of an example from chapter 6 where the author explains how he learned to play a musical instrument. While some scholars may have reservations about certain musical instruments, the author's experience can still help us understand the learning process. In this chapter, the author openly acknowledges the presence of mental barriers, especially self-doubt, which can impede our progress. However, he shows that with persistent effort and gaining confidence in playing chords and strumming patterns, these obstacles can be overcome." Aimen chimed in, "What I also found fascinating was the author's discovery that by learning just five chords, not hundreds, one could play a large number of songs. That's incredible and applies to most skills. By mastering only a few key things, we can attain a reasonable level of proficiency."



"Alright, we've reached the final step: 'Practicing the most important sub-skills for at least twenty hours,'" Aimen declared. Javeria passionately added her observation, "Throughout the book, the author emphasizes the crucial role of dedicated practice. In every skill he tackles—whether it's programming, windsurfing, playing the ukulele, touch typing, or yoga—he devotes a significant amount of time to rigorous practice. For example, he spent 21 hours practicing touch typing to achieve his desired typing speed. In Chapter 5, during his windsurfing journey, he tirelessly worked on fundamental sub-skills like launching the board, hoisting the sail, and navigating different wind conditions until he reached a commendable level of proficiency, a feat accomplished through a relentless practice of 20 hours." Aimen chimed in with a warm smile, "Absolutely, the age-old saying that practice makes perfect holds true for individuals of all ages and genders." The two friends exchanged smiles, reflecting their shared excitement for the journey ahead.



"Alright, we've tackled the four primary steps, and I must say, it's been quite an exciting journey," Aimen declared with a grin. She then turned to Javeria with curiosity, "By the way, did you happen to spot any other recurring themes?" Javeria's face lit up with enthusiasm as she responded, "Oh, you bet I did! I've got some interesting notes on that. Want a sneak peek?" Aimen couldn't resist the offer and eagerly accepted Javeria's diary, ready to dive into the additional themes she had uncovered. Here's what they found:

#### Goal Setting:

- The author consistently sets specific goals for each stage of the learning process, progressively increasing the level of proficiency he aspires to achieve.

#### Learning from Examples and Others:

- The author leverages existing examples and resources to enhance his learning.
- In Chapter 9, he learns Go by studying ranked problems and books on Go strategy for beginners. In Chapter 10, while mastering touch typing, the author utilizes typing tutors and established training methods, learning from existing tools and experiences.

#### Learning by Doing:

- No one becomes an expert by simply watching YouTube videos! :)

#### Acquiring Necessary Tools and Resources:

- The author ensures he has the appropriate tools and resources to facilitate his skill acquisition. Obviously, no one can play cricket without a cricket bat or something of similar size and shape :)

#### Feedback Loop:

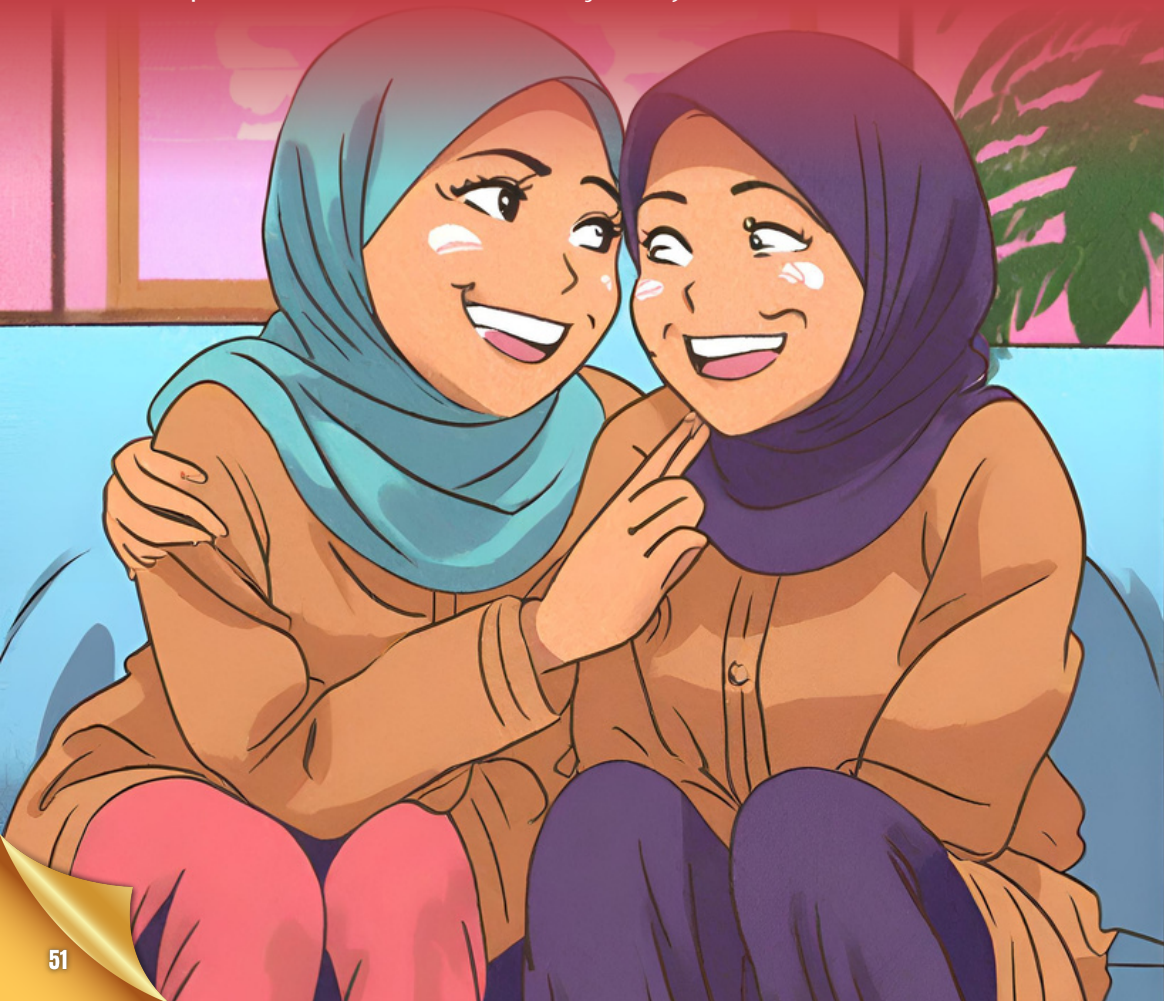
- The concept of a feedback loop in skill acquisition is a continuous cycle, involving practicing the skill; self-assessment utilizing resources such as experts, answer keys etc.; adjustment based on the feedback; and refinement.



Aimen complimented Javeria's analytical approach, saying, "You're really good at seeing connections and finding main themes." She jokingly raised Javeria's arm in a triumphant gesture, like a boxer who has conquered the ring, and they both laughed together.

"I think we've got a thorough grasp of what the book has to offer. Let's finalize our plan and kickstart our learning journey starting next Monday," Javeria proposed. Aimen's excitement was palpable as she responded eagerly, "I can hardly wait!"

With their plans in place, the girls joined their families for some fun before eventually heading home, their hearts brimming with anticipation for the transformative journey that awaited them.



## 10. From Vision to Victory


On Monday, the girls embarked on their learning journey with unwavering determination. Aimen attended Arabic classes alongside her supportive mentor and father, while Javeria delved into the world of Graphic Design under the guidance of Uncle Tauseef. With clear objectives mapped out for their progress, their approach was to acquire enough knowledge to practice effectively and identify areas where improvement was needed. They diligently organized their learning resources: Aimen secured a copy of the book 'Lisan ul Quran' and subscribed to Shaykh Amir Suhail's enlightening YouTube channel, while Javeria invested in a pro subscription for Canva, coupled with access to informative tutorials. Avoiding the trap of overwhelming expert-level details, they gradually built the foundations through cycles of learning, practice, feedback, and refinement. They eagerly sought on-demand knowledge, turning to video lectures and expert guidance whenever necessary.



Their dedicated routine consisted of studying after Fajr and revising after Isha, ensuring an uninterrupted learning environment. Despite the challenges they encountered on their journey, they remained steadfast in their commitment, replacing any negativity with unwavering positivity. The mutual support they provided, regularly checking each other's progress and offering motivation, played a pivotal role in their success. As their journey neared completion, Aimen began to master the skill of crafting Arabic sentences, while Javeria gradually honed her poster-making abilities. She even designed some posters for iCAN's activities. Their journey was not just about learning but also a testament to the power of determination and mutual support.







Their families stood as pillars of unwavering support throughout their learning journey, going above and beyond to facilitate their progress. The relentless march of time continued until both of them had amassed approximately 20 hours of dedicated practice. Reuniting on the 21st day, they joyfully shared their individual journeys and reveled in their remarkable progress.

Aimen proudly showcased her newfound ability to understand the ayat of the Quran. She recited Surah Ar-Rahman and explained the meaning of the beautiful words she recited. Deeply impressed by her friend's achievements, Javeria eagerly shared her own successes, revealing a multitude of artworks, including a beautifully illustrated children's storybook.

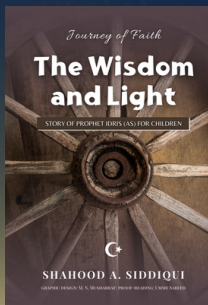
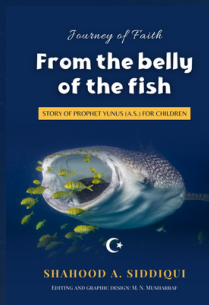
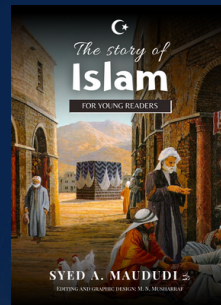
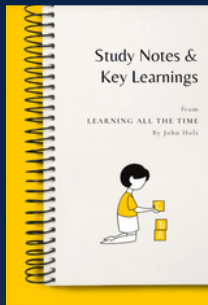
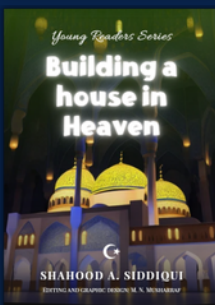
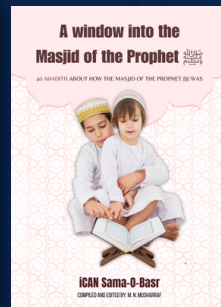
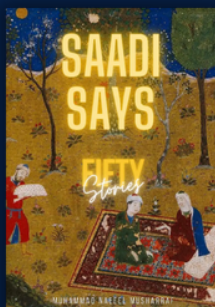
In that moment, their eyes brimmed with thankfulness towards Allah and a profound sense of gratitude. With heartfelt appreciation, they embraced each other and collectively expressed their thanks to Allah for granting them the opportunity to acquire skills that would enable them to serve the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

"Aimen, I have a brilliant idea," Javeria exclaimed with excitement as sudden inspiration struck her. "What is it, Javeria? Please share; I'm eager to hear," Aimen responded enthusiastically. "How about we document our incredible journey in a book so that others can benefit from it too?" Javeria suggested. "What a marvelous idea! Let's do it. We shall title this book 'Skill Superheroes: Aimen and Javeria's Epic Learning Adventure,'" Aimen became excited. Let us commence our new adventure with a heartfelt dua," Javeria raised her hands in supplication, and Aimen joined in.

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْفَعْنِي بِمَا عَلَّمْتَنِي وَ عَلَّمْنِي مَا يَنْفَعُنِي وَ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

O Allah, benefit me from that which You taught me, and teach me that which will benefit me, and increase me in knowledge.

# Some of our other publications for parents and children



**SAMA O BASR**