

Disambiguation page for Grouping & Distinguishing devices

Page

Discussion

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

Overview

Encyclopedia Interpretation

The Arabic rhetorical devices of [Grouping & Distinguishing](#) can overlap because they all involve bringing items together, separating them, assigning attributes, or arranging correspondences between elements. This page distinguishes the seven devices by their primary operative mechanism.

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DOI

10.64393/balagha.disambiguation.grouping

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Date

16 February 2026

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One-Sentence Discriminators

- **Syntactic Grouping**: brings multiple subjects together under one shared predicate or judgment.
- **Semantic Grouping**: brings together mutually congruous elements by meaning, without opposition.
- **Dividing Items**: mentions multiple items, parts, or states and explicitly assigns to each what belongs to it.
- **Grouping Then Dividing**: first unifies multiple elements under one shared ruling, then divides or redistributes that ruling into distinct assignments.
- **Grouping Then Differentiating**: brings subjects together under one shared meaning or ruling, then distinguishes the particular aspect by which each participates in it.
- **Differentiating Between Similar Items**: takes two things of the same type and produces a contrast between them.
- **Folding and Unfolding**: presents multiple items and then gives corresponding information without explicitly assigning each item to its counterpart.

Primary Distinctions

The seven devices of [Grouping & Distinguishing](#) may be distinguished through several points of distinction.

Point of Distinction	Distinguishing Question
Syntactic grouping vs. semantic grouping	Are multiple subjects joined under one shared predicate or judgment (Syntactic Grouping), or are multiple elements brought together because they are semantically congruous (Semantic Grouping)?
Simple grouping vs. grouping followed by redistribution	Are the items merely gathered under one shared ruling (Syntactic Grouping), or is that shared ruling then divided into distinct assignments (Grouping Then Dividing)?
Explicit assignment vs. inferred correspondence	Is each item explicitly assigned its corresponding attribute or outcome (Dividing Items), or must the addressee infer the correspondence between two sequences (Folding and Unfolding)?
Division without prior unity vs. unity followed by division	Are items or states divided and assigned directly (Dividing Items), or is there first a collective ruling that is later redistributed (Grouping Then Dividing)?
Differentiating aspects vs. differentiating similar items	Are subjects first united under one predicate and then distinguished by their mode or aspect of participation (Grouping Then Differentiating), or are two similar-category items contrasted to show non-equivalence (Differentiating Between Similar Items)?
Shared predicate vs. inferred pairing	Does one predicate apply collectively to multiple subjects (Syntactic Grouping), or are two sets of elements placed in correspondence without explicit pairing (Folding and Unfolding)?

Comparison Table

Device	Core Mechanism	Structural Pattern	What Is Grouped or Distinguished?	Type of Correspondence	Main Distinguishing Feature
Syntactic Grouping	Multiple subjects are brought under one shared predicate or judgment.	Multiple subjects → one predicate or ruling	Subjects, nouns, or entities	Collective predication	Several subjects share one explicit grammatical or semantic ruling.

Semantic Grouping	Mutually congruous elements are brought together by meaning, not by opposition.	Related elements placed together	Related qualities, concepts, images, or semantic fields	Semantic congruity	The elements fit one another thematically or semantically, rather than sharing one grammatical predicate.
Dividing Items	Multiple items, parts, or states are each assigned what specifically belongs to them.	Items or states → explicit individual assignments	Parts, divisions, cases, or states	Explicit one-to-one assignment	Each item receives its own specific attribute, outcome, or condition.
Grouping Then Dividing	Multiple items are first unified under one ruling, then divided into distinct assignments, or the reverse.	Shared ruling → redistribution, or redistribution → shared ruling	A collective judgment and its differentiated parts	Two-stage grouping and division	The device requires both unity and division: a shared ruling and a structured redistribution.
Grouping Then Differentiating	Subjects are brought together under one meaning or ruling, then distinguished by the aspect through which each participates in it.	Shared predicate → different aspects	Subjects sharing one ruling or comparison	Aspectual differentiation	The same shared predicate applies, but each subject participates in it through a different aspect.
Differentiating Between Similar Items	Two things of one type are contrasted to show a difference between them.	Same type → explicit contrast	Similar-category items	Contrast within shared genus	The items belong to the same category, but the wording produces non-equivalence between them.
Folding and Unfolding	Multiple items are mentioned, followed by corresponding information whose pairings are left for the addressee to infer.	Items listed → corresponding descriptions without explicit pairing	Two sequences: folded items and unfolded descriptions	Inferred correspondence	The addressee reconstructs which description belongs to which item.

Decision Tree

1 Are multiple elements simply being brought together?

- Multiple subjects share one explicit predicate or judgment → **Syntactic Grouping**
- Multiple elements are grouped because they are semantically congruous, without opposition → **Semantic Grouping**

2 Are items, parts, or states being assigned specific attributes or outcomes?

- Each item is explicitly assigned what belongs to it, without requiring a prior collective ruling → **Dividing Items**
- A shared ruling is first stated and then redistributed into distinct assignments, or distinct assignments are later unified under one ruling → **Grouping Then Dividing**

3 Is unity followed by distinction?

- Subjects are first united under one predicate or ruling, then distinguished by the aspect through which each participates in it → **Grouping Then Differentiating**
- Two items of the same type are contrasted to show that they are not equivalent in value, quality, or condition → **Differentiating Between Similar Items**

4 Are two sequences placed in correspondence without explicit assignment?

- Multiple items are mentioned, then corresponding descriptions follow, leaving the addressee to infer the pairings → **Folding and Unfolding**

Key Pairwise Distinctions

The following pairs are most likely to be confused in practice.

Syntactic Grouping vs. Semantic Grouping

In Syntactic Grouping, multiple subjects are gathered under one shared predicate or judgment. The key question is grammatical and propositional: what single ruling applies to all the subjects? In Semantic Grouping, the elements are not necessarily governed by one predicate; rather, they are brought together because they are mutually congruous in meaning, image, theme, or semantic field.

Syntactic Grouping vs. Grouping Then Dividing

Both involve a unifying element. In Syntactic Grouping, the shared ruling itself is the device: multiple subjects are brought under one predicate or judgment. In Grouping Then Dividing, the shared ruling is only one stage of the structure; the gathered elements are then divided, redistributed, or assigned distinct outcomes.

Dividing Items vs. Grouping Then Dividing

Both may involve assigning different attributes or outcomes to different items. The difference is whether a prior unity is present. In Dividing Items, the items, parts, or states are directly divided and each is assigned what belongs to it. In Grouping Then Dividing, a collective ruling or shared judgment is first established, and the later division redistributes that prior unity.

Dividing Items vs. Folding and Unfolding

Both involve correspondence between items and attributes. In Dividing Items, the correspondence is explicit: each item is clearly assigned its specific attribute, outcome, or condition. In Folding and Unfolding, the correspondence is not explicitly stated; the addressee must infer which later description belongs to which earlier item.

Grouping Then Differentiating vs. Differentiating Between Similar Items

Both involve distinction, but the starting point differs. In Grouping Then Differentiating, subjects are first united under one shared predicate, ruling, or comparison, and then the particular aspect of each subject's participation is distinguished. In Differentiating Between Similar Items, the two items already belong to the same type or genus, and the speaker produces a contrast between them to show non-equivalence.

Grouping Then Differentiating vs. Grouping Then Dividing

Both combine unity with later specification. In Grouping Then Dividing, the shared ruling is redistributed into distinct assignments or outcomes. In Grouping Then Differentiating, the shared ruling remains in place, but each subject is shown to participate in that ruling through a different aspect or mode.

Semantic Grouping vs. Differentiating Between Similar Items

Both depend on a relationship between the items. In Semantic Grouping, the relationship is congruity: the items suit one another and are brought together without opposition. In Differentiating Between Similar Items, the relationship is shared type followed by contrast: the items are similar enough to be compared, but the wording produces a difference between them.

Page History

- 2026-05-12 - Page expanded with more analytical tools and renamed to [Disambiguation page for Grouping & Distinguishing devices](#).
- 2026-02-16 - Page created: [Disambiguation table for Grouping & Distinguishing devices](#).

Category: [Disambiguation Pages](#)

Cite this page: Dr Mandar Marathe  (2026). "Disambiguation page for Grouping & Distinguishing devices". *al-Balagha.com: The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric*. <https://doi.org/10.64393/balagha.disambiguation.grouping>

