

How to Pray for a Recent Convert (part 1 of 2)

Description: A brief description of the formal prayers, the first obligatory act of worship to be performed after accepting Islam. Part 1 discusses what needs to be done to prepare oneself for the formal prayers.

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Objectives

To learn how to perform ablution and the ritual bath and when are they required.

Arabic Terms

- *Wudoo* " ablution.
- *Salah* - the Arabic word to denote a direct connection between the believer and Allah. More specifically, in Islam it refers to the formal five daily prayers and is the most important form of worship.
- *Ghusl* " ritual bath.

What is Ablution (*Wudoo*)?

Wudoo, translated as ablution, is done before certain acts of worship. It is basically washing of one's face, hands and arms, then wiping the head and ears, and finally washing the feet.

When Should I Perform Ablution (*Wudoo*)?

A Muslim must perform ablution before he performs the prayer (*salah*) if he enters a state of ritual impurity, namely due to one of the following causes:

- (1) Breaking wind.
- (2) Urination.
- (3) Defecation (passing feces).
- (4) Deep sleep.

These things are considered to 'invalidate' or 'break' ablution (*wudoo*). For example, you must perform ablution after waking up in the morning to pray your morning prayer (

salah), because sleeping oebreaks” the ablution. After using the toilet, you have to perform ablution before you can perform prayer because urinating and defecating oebreak” the ablution.

How to Perform Ablution?

Before you perform ablution, you should make sure your body parts are not soiled with impurities. Make sure you have wiped off all traces of urine or feces with toilet paper or water after having used the toilet.

Ablution is done in the following order:

1. Intend in your heart that you are performing ablution in order to enter a state of purity for *salah*.
2. Begin with the name of Allah by saying, '*Bismillaah*' which means, 'I begin with the Name of Allah.'
3. Rinse the mouth. This can be done once, twice or thrice. See Figure 1.



Figure 1

4. Clean the nostrils by sniffing water and blowing it. This can be done once, twice or thrice. See Figure 2.



Figure 2

5. Wash the face from the hairline to the chin and jawbone, from ear to ear. This can be done once, twice or thrice. See Figure 3.



Figure 3

6. Wash the hands and arms up to and including the elbows. This can be done once, twice or thrice. Begin with the right hand. See Figure 4.



Figure 4

7. After wetting the hands again, wipe the entire head by putting the hands at the front of your head and take them to the back of the head, then bring them back to the place where you started. This is to be done only once. See Figure 5.



Figure 5

8. Wipe the inner part of the ears with the index fingers and the back of the ears with the thumbs. This is to be done only once. See Figure 6.



Figure 6

9. Wash the feet up to and including the ankles. This can be done once, twice or thrice. Begin with the right foot. See Figure 7.



Figure 7

What is Ritual Bath (*Ghusl*)?

Ghusl is the Arabic word for a complete bath. In certain cases, it is not enough to perform ablution before prayers. One needs to purify themselves by taking a full bath, that is doing the ritual bath (*ghusl*), before they may pray. You are required to do the ritual bath in the following cases:

1. The emission of semen or female orgasmic fluid, whether due to sexual intercourse, wet dreams or masturbation.
2. After sexual intercourse. More precisely, a bath has to be taken if the penis enters the vagina, regardless of whether fluid was emitted or not.
3. Menstruation and post-natal bleeding[1].
4. It is also preferred to perform the ritual bath upon entering Islam.

A female cannot offer *salah* (prayer) when she is experiencing menstruation or postpartum bleeding. After her bleeding ends, she must purify herself by taking the ritual bath, and then she may resume *salah* (prayer).

How to Perform the Ritual Bath

- (1) Intend in your heart to purify yourself for Allah's sake.
- (2) Wash off any impurity that may be on the body.
- (3) Wash the entire body with water leaving no part dry.

(4) Rinse the mouth and nose.

Endnotes:

[1] Post-natal or post partum bleeding is that bleeding which occurs after childbirth or miscarriage.

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