

Prayer for Beginners (part 1 of 2): Before you Pray

Description: A two-part lesson that gives an overview of the ritual prayer (*salah*), which is the most important form of worship for a Muslim. Part 1: Preparation for prayers along with learning their names, specific timings and the direction of prayer.

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Prerequisites

- How to Pray for a Recent Convert (2 parts).

Objectives

- To learn how to find the prayer times and the direction to pray (*qiblah*).
- To learn the five obligatory prayers by name, their timings, and number of units (*rakahs*) in each of them.
- To learn some points on getting ready for prayer (*salah*).

Arabic Terms

- *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.
- *Rakah* - unit of prayer.
- *Qiblah*: The direction one faces during the formal prayers.
- *Wudoo* " ablution.
- *Ghusl* " ritual bath.
- *Kabah* - The cube-shaped structure located in the city of Mecca. It serves as a focal point towards which all Muslims face when praying.
- *Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha* " the names of five daily prayers in Islam.
- *Fard* " an obligatory duty.

Prayer Times

Prayer times change considerably between winter and summer. You have three options:

(a) Ask a devout Muslim when are the prayer times and note them. They will change little over the next few days.

(b) Get them online from here:

<http://www.islamicfinder.org/>

You can find the prayer (*salah*) timings anywhere in the world. This site will also list the mosques nearest to you.

(c) Your local mosque or Islamic center most likely prints a prayer schedule that will also list the timings for the congregational prayers held in the mosque. Please contact them to obtain a copy. In the mosque, a new Muslim will find much needed support as well.

Prayer Name in Arabic	Prayer Name in English	Number of Units (<i>Rakahs</i>)	Timings
<i>Fajr</i>	Dawn Prayer	2	From dawn till sunrise
<i>Dhuhr</i>	Afternoon Prayer	4	From the time of <i>Dhuhr</i> till the time <i>Asr</i> begins
<i>Asr</i>	Late Afternoon Prayer	4	From the time of <i>Asr</i> till the time <i>Magrib</i> begins
<i>Maghrib</i>	Sunset Prayer	3	From the time of <i>Magrib</i> till the time <i>Isha</i> begins
<i>Isha</i>	Night Prayer	4	From the time of <i>Isha</i> till the middle of the night. Due to necessity, can be extended up to dawn

Table 1 lists the five daily prayers and the number of units (*rakahs*) for each obligatory (*fard*) prayer.

Which Direction Do I pray in?

A Muslim is required to face the direction of the *Kabah* (the Sacred House of Allah in Mecca) for each prayer *salah*. The *Kabah* is the first house built to worship humanity's One,

True Lord. All Muslims throughout the world face it when they pray, leaving the world behind them whilst submitting themselves to their Sustainer. This direction is called the *qiblah* and it is fairly easy to figure it out.

Again, you have several options to figure out the direction of prayer (*qiblah*).

(1) Ask a fellow Muslim which in which direction you need to pray.

(2) <http://www.islamicfinder.org/> will tell you where the *Kabah* is located from where you are.

(3) Some wrist watches are available in the market that make finding the direction of prayer quite easy, especially when one is in an unfamiliar place or traveling. They can be ordered online^[1].

Getting Ready for Prayer (*Salah*)

1. The prayer is obligatory on every adult, sane Muslim once the time for a certain prayer has started.

2. Minimum clothing requirements must be met by both men and women for prayer.

A Muslim man must wear clothing that at least covers him from navel to knee, and make sure that his shoulders are covered.

A Muslim woman must wear loose clothing that covers her whole body, including her head (and ears) and feet. She need not cover her hands and face.

3. A Muslim must be in the state of purity, meaning the person:

- should perform *wudoo* (ablution) if he has passed wind, urinated, defecated or woke up from sleep since the last time he performed *wudoo*.
- should perform the *ghusl* (ritual bath) if he woke up from a wet-dream, ejaculated semen, had intercourse and additionally, in case of a woman, she ended her monthly cycle or her post-childbirth bleeding.

4. He must make sure there is no impurity on his clothes, body, or the spot he will pray.

5. He should face the direction of prayer (*qiblah*).

6. Make intention to perform the prayers in the heart.

7. The formal prayer (*salah*) must be offered in Arabic, so please read the transliteration of the Arabic text provided at the end of 'Prayer for Beginners (part 2 of 2)'. The translation is given just to help know what you are saying.

(Disclaimer: All links are provided for educational purposes only. NewMuslims.com is not responsible for the content of external websites.)

Endnotes:

[1] See: <http://www.alfajr.com/en/index.html>

The web address of this article:

<http://www.newmuslims.com/lessons/14>

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