

The Islamic Dress Code (part 1 of 3)

Description: In this lesson we learn the meaning of the word *hijab* and look at the dress codes for both men and women. We also discuss the purpose of a dress code and learn that it helps protect society and preserves healthy relationships.

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Lesson Objectives:

Learn and understand the conditions of the dress code for both men and women.

Arabic terms:

- *Awrah* " the parts of the body that should be kept covered.
- *Mahram* " a person, man or woman related to a particular individual by blood, marriage or breastfeeding. One he or she is not permitted to marry, such as the father, nephew, uncle, etc.
- *Haya* " natural or inherent shyness and a sense of modesty.
- *Hijab* " The word *hijab* holds several different meanings, including conceal, hide and screen. It commonly refers to a woman's headscarf and in broader terms to modest clothing and behaviour.

Islam is a complete way of life, each and every aspect is designed by our Creator to advance happy, healthy communities and ease the path to eternal bliss in Paradise. In today's society modesty is seen as a sign of weakness or insecurity. This is not the case in Islam, where modesty is seen as a sign of respect for oneself and others. The *haya* that every human being is born with is seen as something to be treasured. To this end Islam has a dress code for both women and men. Its purpose is to protect the society as a whole and promote modest dressing and behaviour. It creates a barrier between the sexes and allows us to conduct our lives with modesty, dignity and respect.



Islam holds women in very high esteem and the Islamic rules of covering are intended to protect and guard her dignity and honour. The word used most often in regard to

covering is *hijab*. All qualified Muslim scholars throughout the history of Islam agree that fulfilling the conditions of the dress code is an obligation on all Muslim men and women. They have based these conditions on evidence found in the Quran and the Sunnah. Below are the most well known verses of the Quran and the most well known saying from the Prophet Muhammad concerning the subject of *hijab*.

oeO Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. (Quran 33:59)

Say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from sins); and they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what appear thereof... (Quran 24:31).

When a girl reaches the menstrual age, it is not proper that anything should remain exposed except this and this. He pointed to the face and hands.[\[1\]](#)

Women's Hijab

The purpose of *hijab* is to cover the *awrah* and *awrah* varies in different situations and amongst different groups of people.

We begin with the conditions of *hijab* for a woman in public and amongst non-*mahram* men. As long as these conditions are fulfilled a woman may wear whatever she pleases.

1. The *hijab* (covering) must conceal the entire body except the face and the hands.
2. It should not be translucent or tight. Tight clothes, even if they conceal the colour of the skin, still describe the size and shape of the body or part of it, and create vivid images.
3. It should not attract the attention of the opposite gender; thus it should not be extravagant or excessively opulent. Nor should jewellery and makeup be on display.
4. It should not be a garment worn because of vanity or to gain popularity or fame. The female companions were known to wear black and other dark colours but other colours are permissible; a woman must not however wear colourful clothes because of vanity.
5. It should not be perfumed. This prohibition applies to both the body and the clothes.
6. It should not resemble the clothing worn by men.
7. It should not resemble the clothing that is specific to the non-Muslims.

Men's Dress code

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from sins). That is purer for them. And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. (Quran 24:30)

Although they are sometimes overlooked or not well understood there are conditions of dress code for men as well. Some of the conditions are the same as the conditions for woman but others relate particularly to men.

1. The part of the body from the navel to the knees should be covered.
2. It should not resemble the clothing that is specific to the non-Muslims. Western clothing that does not represent a certain group or sect is normally permitted.
3. It should not resemble the clothing worn by women.
4. It should not be tight or see-through.
5. A man is not permitted to wear garments made of silk, or jewellery made of gold.
6. Two types of adornment are forbidden to men but permitted for women. These are, gold and clothing made of pure silk.

The scholars of Islam overwhelmingly agree that for men everything between the navel and the knees (including the knees) must be covered in the presence of anybody. The only exception to this is a man in the presence of his wife.

Finally, it is *recommended* for men not to wear garments that fall below the ankles.

In the next lesson we will look more closely at the definition of *awrah* and discuss the fact that the rules of *awrah* change from situation to situation.

Endnotes:

[1] Abu Dawud

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