

# The Islamic Dress Code (part 3 of 3): Prayer & Wisdom

**Description:** A continuation of the rules of *awrah* including what to wear when praying, and a brief description of the wisdom inherent in the Islamic dress code.

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## Lesson Objectives:

- Understand what must be covered during prayer for men and women.
- Understand the basic wisdom behind a dress code.

## 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.
- *Masjid* - the Arabic term for mosque.

In lesson 2 we discussed the *awrah* amongst different groups of people. This handy table will help you understand the sensible, non complicated rules.

<b>THE RULES OF AWRAH ~</b>	<b>(WHAT CAN BE UNCOVERED)</b>
HUSBAND	There is no <i>awrah</i> between a husband and wife.
MAHRAM MEN	That which is normally visible such as her hair, face, neck, arms, legs from below the knee and feet.
NON-MAHRAM MEN	Face and hands.
MUSLIM WOMEN	That which is normally visible, such as her hair, face, neck, arms, shoulders and feet.
NON MUSLIM WOMEN	The scholars differ. Some permit the same covering as per Muslim women; others recommend stricter covering depending on the situation.
SMALL CHILDREN	As for Muslim women.

OLDER MALE CHILDREN (FAMILY MEMBERS)	As for <i>mahram</i> men.
OLDER MALE CHILDREN (NON FAMILY MEMBERS)	As for non- <i>mahram</i> men.

## The *Awrah* Whilst Praying

In the first two lessons we learned a lot of new terms and tried to assimilate a lot of new information. We now shift the focus to what to wear when praying. Praying is something that every Muslim does at least five times per day. It is more than a few moments of quiet contemplation - it is a time when an individual is connected to the Creator of the Universe " Allah. For this pleasure it makes sense to want to look and feel our best.



When the time comes for a woman to pray, one of the conditions that must be fulfilled in order for her prayer to be valid is that she covers her *awrah*.

**oe...Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes) while praying..." (Quran 7:31)**

*The Prophet said, 'Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil'.*

The *awrah* of a woman when she prays is the same as for non-*mahram* men. (Please refer to the above table). However it is perfectly acceptable for a woman to wear a long loose fitting garment over her indoor clothes, presuming she is praying in the privacy of her home. If she is praying in the *masjid*, of course she will be wearing clothes that are acceptable in front of strangers.

In order for a man's prayer to be valid he too must cover his *awrah*, which is from the navel to the knees. However because Islam is a religion that is very concerned with community cohesion and respect for others, a man must always be aware of where he is. In accordance to the spirit of *haya* it is always advisable for a Muslim (man or woman) to be cautious about those things that could affect either him or those around him.

It is desirable for a man to wear perfume when he is standing in front of his Lord for prayer. Women must be careful of this point. While it is allowable, even desirable for her to wear perfume in the home it is not acceptable for either her skin or her clothing to be perfumed if she wants to pray in the *masjid*.

*oelf any one of you (women) attends evening prayer, let her not touch any perfume."*[\[1\]](#)

# The Wisdom in the Islamic Dress Code

There is great wisdom in the Islamic dress code. In order to see and understand it clearly one must remember a few basic concepts. First and foremost, that Islam was revealed for all people in all places, at all times. Thus what is in or out of fashion is not relevant. Secondly, Islam is a holistic religion concerned with humankind's physical, spiritual and emotional health, and not just for each individual but for the community or society as a whole. This involves respect; for Allah, for each other and for oneself.

Thirdly, a dress code is required for both men and women, Islam does not put the responsibility entirely on one gender, and in fact the verses referring to men were revealed first. However both men and women are commanded to lower their gaze and protect their modesty; and both men and women are expected to create a healthy social environment with constructive morals, manners and values.

The term *hijab*, is more than a scarf and more than a dress code. It is a term that denotes modest dressing and modest behaviour. For instance, if a Muslim woman was correctly covered but at the same time using bad language, she would not be fulfilling the requirements of *hijab*. If a Muslim man was covered from the navel to the knee but walking around in public calling attention to himself or behaving rudely he would also not be behaving in an appropriate manner.

Women who wear *hijab* point out many benefits to be gained from adhering to the Islamic dress code. Some describe wearing *hijab* as being "set free" from society's unrealistic expectations. They are no longer thought of as sexual objects, but are desired for their intellect. They are no longer valued for their looks or body shape but for their personality and character. Women wearing *hijab* report that it minimises sexual harassment in the workplace.

Many women report that people (both Muslims and non Muslims) are more inclined to show good manners towards a woman in a scarf. Men open doors, give up seats on public transport, apologise for bad language, and offer to carry groceries and many other small kindnesses that were once a normal part of life in most western communities.

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Endnotes:

[1] Saheeh Muslim

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