

Staff Development
Package



Islam



The Five Pillars

– Salaat –



The Five Pillars - Salaat

(All words within the text in **bold** are in the glossary)

الصَّلَاةُ

Salaat

Dzikh, Du'a, & Salaat

The English word prayer is used to translate three Arabic words with different meanings in Islam. These words are **dzikh**, **du'a**, and **salaat**.

Muslims understand Islam as a complete way of life, so whether they are working or playing, studying or relaxing, they can worship God by dzikh (Remembrance) doing all they can as best they can to serve and glorify the All-Merciful.

Sometimes when Remembering God, they may think of words to ask for help or guidance, for forgiveness and relief from guilt, to thank God for their blessings or to praise God's majesty. Such spontaneous prayers are called du'a (Calling).

But in the salaat, Muslims share in the form of worship practised by **Muhammad** the Messenger, who made this type of prayer five times each day. Alone or together, at home or in the mosque, Muslims still pray salaat in the same way today.

Salaat can be made communally or as private prayer. All the world is a mosque, and prayer can be made anywhere except unclean places like toilets, or graveyards. The salaat is the second Pillar of Islam, and its regular practice is considered to be essential to a Muslim's spiritual well-being, in the way that regular food is essential for our physical well-being.

Principles of Wudu

(Also seen as "wuzu" taken from the Urdu form of the word)

The salaat begins not with words and actions, but with the intention to make it. Performance of the salaat, however, first requires that the Muslim be in a state of wudu, or ritual cleanliness, and the wudu is itself dependent on cleanliness requirements that begin at the toilet.

In this requirement for toilet hygiene to perform the salaat, a Muslim is brought face to face with the animal nature of his humanity in its most basic expression. Thus the spiritual and esoteric nature of the prayer never loses sight of the exoteric, and a firm grounding in reality.



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Wudu deals very specifically with the body's points of exit and entry, the doors between the inner and the outer, and draws a clear line of separation between what comes out and what goes in. Muslims begin by washing the relevant parts after using the toilet. In this act Muslims recognise the poisonous nature of such excreta, and learn to use water as a purifying agent.

This knowledge is not born into humans, and needs to be learned. Small children do not recognize the poisonous nature of excreta, and many adults also show a remarkable disregard for the fact. The principle of human hygiene extends into Muslim civic life, with provision of community sewage systems, and provision of clean water supplies. The principle can also be seen in the Muslim approach to ecology, and also to food hygiene where the approach to food involves ridding it of impurities. This can be seen in the traditional form of animal slaughter, for example, where the beast should be calmed before the moment of death, thus minimising the release of toxins such as adrenalin into the bloodstream, and with the blood being drained from the body as an integral part of the process of slaughter.

The Form of Wudu

In the requisite state of cleanliness, and after having consciously made the Intention to wash for prayer, the wudu involves washing various parts of the body in a formal sequence. First the hands are washed, then the mouth is rinsed and teeth and tongue cleaned, then inside the nose is washed by snuffing water and blowing the nose clean. The face, then forearms up to the elbow follow, then the top of the head, the ears, and the back of the neck, and ending with the washing of the feet.

But the wudu is more than just personal hygiene. While making wudu, many muslims will recite certain words to accompany the actions, recognizing for example that what we do with our hands and what comes out of our mouths can also be offensive to others, and that what we take in through our eyes and ears can be as poisonous as anything we might ingest through our mouths or noses.

It is a tremendous boon to the Muslim traveller in foreign parts, where public toilet facilities can seem few and far between, to know that relief can surely be found by heading for the **minaret** of the local **mosque**. For unlike many other buildings where bodily functions tend to be ignored, toilet and washing facilities are an integral part of the mosque complex, and in parts of the Indian sub-continent apparently remote from all forms of sanitation, mosques can be found that even provide hot showers on winter mornings. In hot countries mosques tend to have pools and fountains in their courtyards, the water of which can be used to make wudu, but in Glasgow mosques the facilities are provided indoors, with rows of small seats in front of individual taps.

When necessary wudu is also made at home, of course, through a sink is not the ideal place to wash the feet, and Muslims quickly develop an ability to balance on one leg with one foot in the air, and thus escape serious accidents in the bathroom. To avoid these gymnastics, some will wash using water from a jug or bowl, or standing in the bath, which although less flamboyant is certainly safer.



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Tayammum

Wudu is a sealing of the body, only broken when the inner body is opened to the outside world, as when returning to the toilet, or breaking wind. That it is more than simple cleanliness is made clear by the fact that if water is unavailable a symbolic washing using clean earth or sand is still necessary, and this is known as **Tayammum**. The act of Tayammum recognises that earth also has the power to clean, as we might use a powder to polish coins or scour a bath. It is also apparent that we can use clean earth in order to clean water itself.

Ghusl

Certain events in a Muslim's life demand a more thorough form of washing known as **ghusl**. Sexual relations, childbirth, and handling the dead all demand a complete body wash or shower. In ghusl we wash the body's largest organ, the skin, including that other link between the inner body and the outer, the navel. It is also required that a Muslim makes ghusl before putting on **Ihram** for Pilgrimage, and recommended before participation in the communal Friday prayer.

Words

There are various Muslim traditions as to words to accompany the actions, with some groups giving greater stress than others to exact repetition of exact formulae. Almost all Muslims, however, would start with a **Bismillah** and end with the **Shahada**.

Bismillah

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

In the name of God the all-Merciful, the all-Compassionate

Shahada

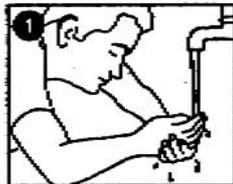
La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah

There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God

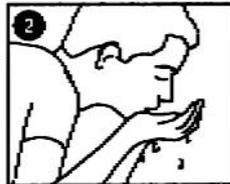


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Typical sequence of actions for Wudu as might be found in instruction booklets



1
Wash both hands up to the wrists three times, making sure that water has reached between the fingers.



2
Put a handful of water into your mouth and rinse it out thoroughly three times.



3
Sniff water into your nostrils three times to clean them.



4
Wash the tip of your nose.



5
Wash your face three times from right ear to left ear...



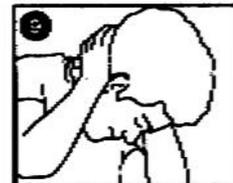
6
...and from forehead to throat.



7
Wash your right arm and then your left arm thoroughly from wrist up to elbow three times.



8
Move the wet palms over the head starting from the top of forehead...



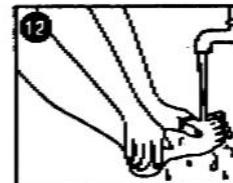
9
...to the back of the head.



10
Pass wet tips of index fingers into grooves and holes of both ears and also pass wet thumbs behind the ears.



11
Next pass the backs of wet hands over the nape.



12
Finally, wash both feet to the ankles starting from the right making sure that water has seeped between the toes and all other parts to the feet.



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Minarets

The Azan (Call to Prayer)

God is Great (*four times*)

I bear witness that there is no god but God (*twice*)

Come to Prayer (*twice*)

Come to Salvation (*twice*)

*Prayer is better than sleep (*for the dawn prayer only – twice*)

God is Great (*twice*)

There is no god but God

Salaat

(Also written *Salah*, as the "t" is silent except when followed by a vowel)

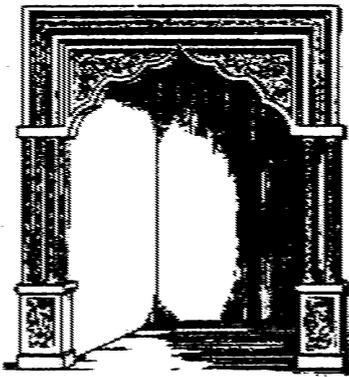
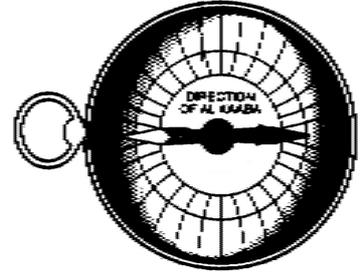
The salaat itself consists of intentions, actions and words, each of which has an outer and an inner constituent. In the intention to make the salaat, the inner will required is obvious, but there are also outer requirements requiring the one who prays to align themselves to face the **Ancient House (Ka'abah)** in **Makkah**, and to make the salaat at the prescribed times of the day.



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Qibla

Muslims praying in an unfamiliar place will first try to establish their Qiblah, the direction of the Ka'abah in Makkah. This can be done using a special compass designed for the purpose, commonly seen and readily available in mosque shops.

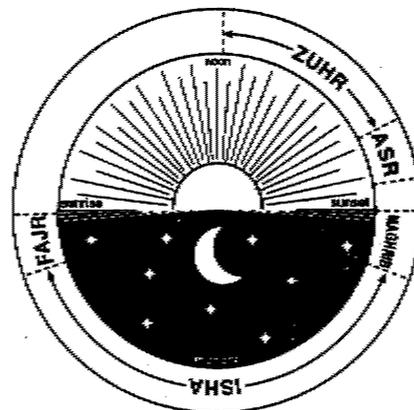


In mosques, the Qiblah is usually indicated by a **mihrab**, a niche or alcove aligned with the direction for prayer, and before which the imam will usually stand during group prayers. In large mosques the mihrab will often be richly decorated.

The **times** of the essential salaah are:

- after first light and before sunrise (**Fajr**)
- between the sun reaching its zenith and mid-afternoon (**Zuhr**)
- between mid-afternoon and sunset (**Asr**)
- after the sun has finished setting (**Maghrib**)
- and in the dark of the night (**Isha**)

It is preferable to make the salaah close to the beginning of the allotted time if possible.

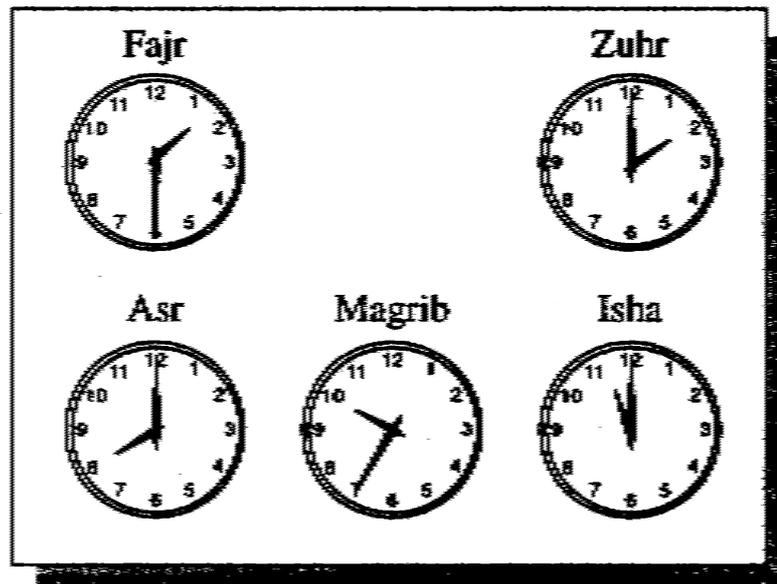




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The Mosque

Although not essential, it is considered preferable for Muslims to make the five daily prayers gathered together in the mosque. The times of these prayers will be displayed in the mosque, often in the form of a display of clock faces, the hands of which will be changed daily to accord with the changing prayer times.



Prayer Clock

The Actions of the Salaat

The salaat involves moving between four positions, standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting. In the repetition of these simple outer forms, a Muslim will see subtle truths expressed. The mechanical aspects of the body performing salaat shows wondrous human characteristics. While standing, a very unstable position for us, our highly flexible bodies are held rigid and vertical using tiny muscle movements and a sense of balance. When in prostration, the position is quite the opposite, being absolutely stable, and one of complete rest, and it is in fact possible to sleep in such a position without falling over. Strength and weakness, tension and rest can be seen in the salaat.

The salaat also has long recognised medical effects, the flexing of the spine, the improved blood circulation that results from the actions, improving activity in the digestive tract, and helping the breath by placing the nose and mouth beneath the chest and allowing heavy gases like carbon dioxide to empty from the bottom of the lungs.

As well as these more tangible aspects of the salaat, there are psychological effects, symbolic and aesthetic aspects, which inevitably have a different meaning and importance to every individual muslim.



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The Words of Salaat

The **Qur'an** is integral to the salaat, which cannot be made without it, and since the earliest times of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, the salaat was the preserver of the Qur'an, as Muslims repeated those parts of the Qur'an they had learned, on a minimal basis of praying five times a day. In point of fact, very little Qur'an is needed for salaat, with the essential recitation of Surah Fatihah, the Chapter of the Opening, the first chapter in the Book.

Surah Fatihah

In the Name of God, All-Merciful, All-Compassionate

*All praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds,
All-Merciful, All Compassionate,
Master of the Day of Judgement,
You alone we serve, and You alone we ask for help*

*Show us the straight way,
The way of those with blessings upon them, not anger upon them,
And not astray.*

Rakahs

The sequence of standing, reciting some Qur'an, bowing, again standing, prostrating, sitting and prostrating again, are known by Muslims as a **rakah**, and all the essential prayers are built up of varying numbers of rakahs. Two for the dawn prayer, four for mid-day, four for the afternoon, three at sunset, and four at night.

Each prayer begins with the **Takbir**:

Allahu Akbar (God is Great!)

and ends by wishing peace on everybody with **Taslim**:

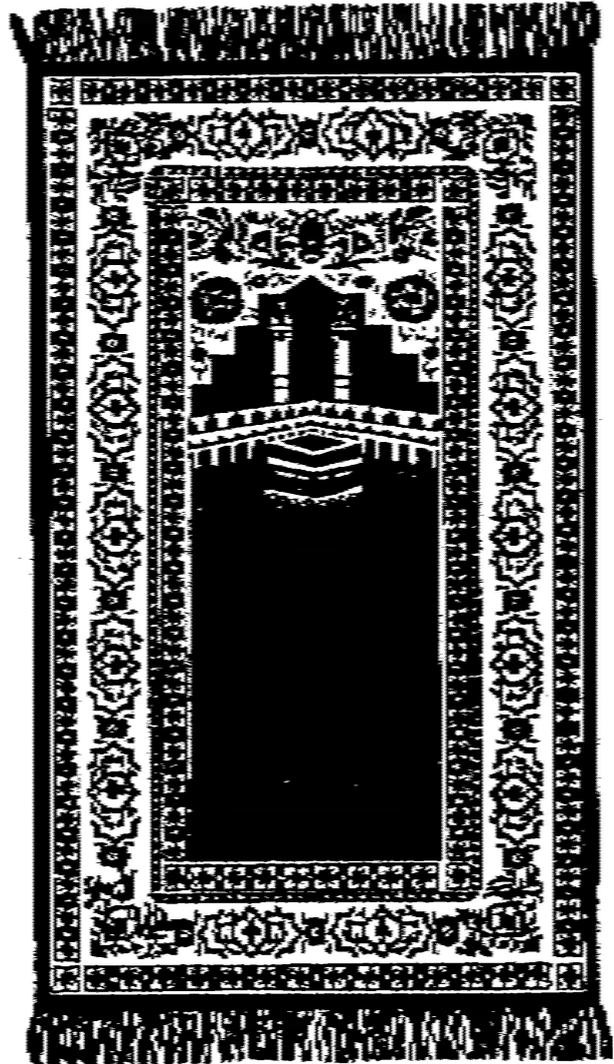
Salaamu Aleikum (Peace be upon you)



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Prayer Mats

A Muslim does not need a prayer mat in order to make his/her salaat. All the world is a mosque, but when making the prayers it is best to find a place that is clean. Placing one's head on the ground in Sajda is of its nature a humbling event, but it should not be unpleasant or disgusting. Muslims soon learned to carry their clean place with them in the shape of a small mat, which could be made of straw, simple woven cotton, or elaborately hand knotted carpets. These mats were often decorated in various ways that became traditional designs linked with certain areas, designs which developed into a rich and complex artform with intricate patternwork, sometimes illustrating a stylised garden, or a mihrab containing a lamp. The prayer mat is sometimes indeed the "magic carpet" of the Arabian Nights.



But although the Prophet may well have occasionally prayed on a carpet in someone's dwelling, his prayers were usually made upon the bare ground. It is said that after a shower of rain, he would rise from making his prayers in the mosque in Madinah with his nose and forehead streaked with mud, and so his followers covered the floor with flat stones so that it would be easier to keep clean. To this day, many Shi'a Muslims consider it necessary to place a small amount of earth (often dried into a small clay tile) at their point of Sajda on a carpet if their prayer is to be valid.

The Sunnah prayers

Over and above the minimum essential salaat, the Prophet used to make many voluntary salaat, always when making the required prayers, but also long into the night when he would pray for many hours. The Prophet said that salaat was one of his three favourite things, along with sweet smells and the company of women. Some of the voluntary prayers are important enough to have their own names, such as the Witr prayer last thing at night, and Tahajjud made before first light in the morning.



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Special Prayers

There are several occasions in the year when special salaats are made, such as at the two major Eids, **Eid ul Adha** and **Eid ul Fitr**, and the lesser Eid of Friday, the prayer for which is known as **Salaat-ul-Jumma**. On Fridays Muslims gather in the mosque to pray together and listen to a short sermon, but it is not a Sabbath-like day of rest, and most Muslims will return to their work after having prayed.

Obligatory nature of Salaat

Ultimately, a Muslim does not perform the salaat for medical reasons, or any other practical justification. It is made in submission to the Will of God, the duty that comes with acceptance of shahada. It is done because it is the act that is most pleasing to Allah.

The Story of the Institution of the Salaat

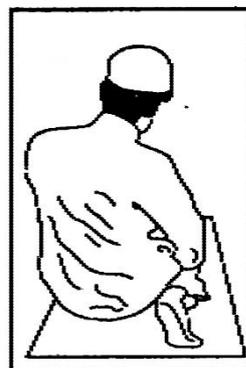
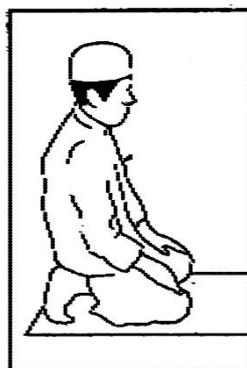
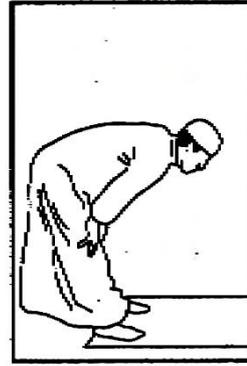
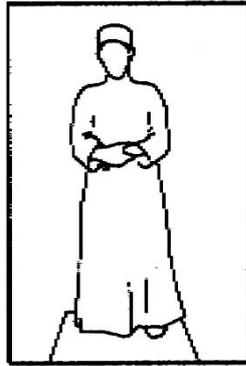
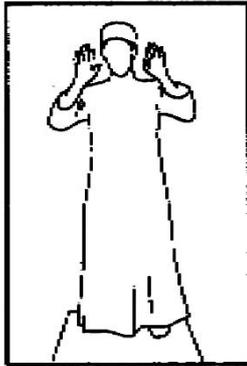
At some time quite close to the beginning of his prophethood, it is said that the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad on the high ground above **Makkah** and showed the Prophet the form of the Wudu and the Salaat, and from that time it was his practice to pray in that manner alone and with his followers.

About a year before the **Hijra**, however, he experienced an extraordinary happening which established the number of obligatory prayers as the five which are still recognised as essential. This event is known as the Night Journey, which is mentioned in Qur'an, with one Surah (S.17) drawing its name from the occasion. The brief Qur'anic references are much elaborated in various folk traditions all around the Muslim world.



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Salaat Sequence



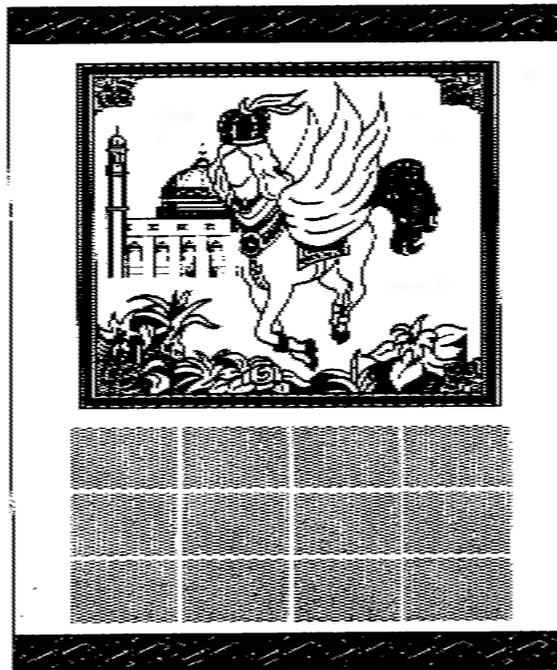


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The Isra' (the Night Journey) and the Mi'raj (the Ascension)

One night while sleeping close to the **Ka'bah** in **Makkah**, the Prophet Muhammad was woken and carried to Jerusalem on the back of a white beast whose every stride was as far as his eye could see. This creature named Buraq (Lightning) was between the size of a mule and an ass, and is traditionally spoken of as winged, and in some traditions acquiring a human face and the tail of a peacock. In Jerusalem Buraq stopped at the place now known as al-Aqsa, and in a place now marked by the Dome of the Rock the Prophet prayed in the company of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other Prophets. After this he was led by Gabriel up through the seven heavens to "the Lote Tree of the Boundary" (S.53) which marks the end of the knowledge of every knower, and beyond which is hidden mystery unknown to any save God alone.

Here it is said that the Prophet first received the command of fifty prayers a day for his followers, but on his descent through the heavens he was repeatedly advised by Moses to return and ask for this burden to be lightened, until finally the obligatory prayers were reduced to five each day, but it is said that whoever performs them receives the value of fifty prayers. The Ascension through the heavens is known as the Mi'raj, and after the Prophet and the Archangel Gabriel had descended once more they returned the way that they had come, and he arrived back at Makkah in time for the dawn salaat.



Popular imaginative representation of Buraq as used for a calendar illustration (Iran)