

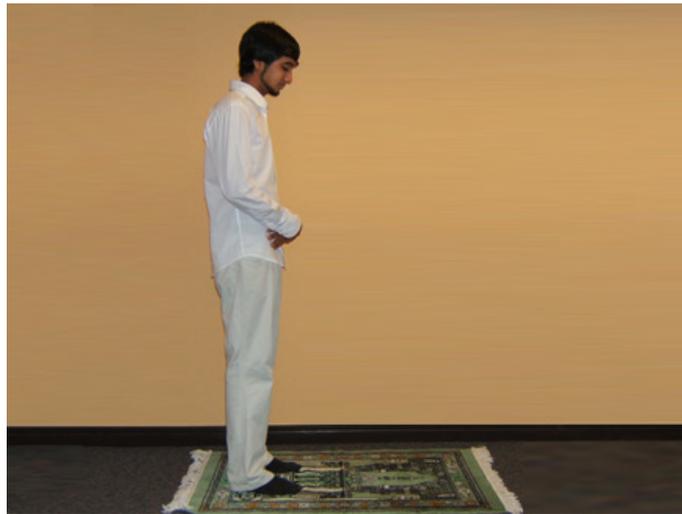
Muslim prayer movements



Takbir

Although Muslims can pray to God at any time or place, and in any language, there are five prayers they are obligated to perform throughout the day. They follow the same pattern so everyone can follow in congregation, and set prayers are always recited in Arabic.

Takbir is entering into the state of prayer by glorifying God. Muslims face towards Makkah and make the intention to pray. To begin the act of prayer, they say 'Allahu Akbar' meaning God is great, raising the hands to the ears or shoulder.



Qiyaam

Muslims place their right hand over their left on their chest or navel while in the standing position. A short supplication glorifying God and seeking His protection is read. This is then followed by Surah Al Fatiha, which is the first chapter in the Qur'an. Verses from any another chapter are then recited.



Ruku

Ruku means bowing. During ruku, Muslims say 'glory be to God, the Most Great', three times.

During prayer, it is forbidden to fidget or look around. Muslims must pray as though they are in the presence of God, and therefore must be in a state of concentration.



Brief qiyaam

While moving into the upright position, Muslims recite 'God listens to the one who praises Him' and while in the standing position, 'To God belongs all praise' then is recited. 'God is Great' is recited again. Hands are loosely at the sides this time.

Each movement is always preceded by the phrase 'God is Great'. This indicates to followers of the prayer that the leader is about to make the next movement.



Sujud

Sujud means to prostrate. While in the prostration position 'Glory be to God, the Most High' is repeated three times. Palms, knees, toes, forehead and nose must be the only body parts touching the ground.

The Prophet said, "The worst thief is he who steals from his prayer." His companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how does he steal from his prayer?" He said, "He does not perfect its ruku and sujud".



Brief sitting

'God is Great' is recited while moving to the sitting position. Muslims pause here for a few seconds, either staying silent, or reciting a shorter prayer. 'God is Great' is recited once more as the sujud position is taken again.

The Prophet recommended that each movement must last at least the time that it takes for the bones to settle. He compared some people's ruku' and sujud to the way that a crow pecks on the ground, because of the speed at which they perform it. (Ibn Khuzaymah)



Sujud

This sujud is the same as the first one.

After reciting 'Glory be to God, the Most High', one 'raka'ah', or unit is complete. Each salah has its own number of units though. The shortest prayer, Fajr, has two.

To continue the prayer from the sujud position, Muslims say 'God is Great' and stand up to repeat everything from Surah Al Fatiha, until they reach this sujud again.



Tashahhud

After saying God is Great, Muslims return to the sitting position. They recite a set number of short prayers in Arabic, praising God, and sending peace on the Prophet. They repeat the declaration of faith, raising the forefinger of their right hand, in order to act as a witness.

They then ask God to bestow blessings and peace upon Prophet Abraham and his family, and ask for the same for Prophet Muhammad. Finally, Muslims ask for forgiveness and mercy, and ask God to bless them and their children until the Day of Judgement.



Peace to the right

To end the prayer, Muslims first turn their face to the right saying 'Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah.'

This is said to the Angels which Muslims believe accompany each human being to record their actions.



Peace to the left

'Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah' is repeated turning to the left side now.

Muslims believe the Angel on the right side records all good actions and thoughts, while the one on the left records all bad actions.