

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO PERFORMING SALAT

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Salam brother/sister !

Let me start by saying that I love and appreciate you immensely for doing what is right. Whether you are a new convert, or someone born to Muslim parents but never performed Salat, you are now embarking on the most important duty in your life.

”Salat” is an Arabic word that means “Prayer”, but the root meaning of the word is “establishing connection”. The main goal of Salat is to disconnect from your worldly affairs and reconnect with your Lord and Master. It is an obligation that Allah has mandated his servants to perform, at a bare minimum, five times a day. In this guide, I will cover the sequence of movements and recitations you will have to memorize to perform the five daily prayers. I suggest you first master all the movements and steps before you memorize the recitations. Ready?

PART I

Prayer Format

A prayer consists of three phases:

- 1) Initiating the prayer
- 2) Completing a sequence of Rak`a's
(I will abbreviate the word with the letter 'R')
- 3) Ending the prayer

Since there are five prayers a day, each prayer has a fixed number of Rak`a's (R's) you need to memorize:

Dawn (Fajr) Prayer: 2 R's (4R's -2)

Initiating->R1->R2->Ending

Noon (Dhuhr) Prayer: 4 R's

Initiating->R1->R2->R3->R4-> Ending

Afternoon (Asr) Prayer: 4 R's

Initiating->R1->R2->R3->R4-> Ending

Sunset (Maghreb) Prayer: 3 R's (4R's -1)

Initiating->R1->R2->R3-> Ending

Evening (Isha) Prayer: (4 R's)

Initiating->R1->R2->R3->R4-> Ending

PART II

Initiating Prayer

1) You need to first try to disconnect from everything around you and from the thoughts that tend to occupy your mind. Be conscious of God's presence. This will allow you to establish "Khu-shu" in your Salat.

Khushu' means to be in a state of humility and consciousness in the presence of Allah. Think of Khushu' as the online green marker. As long as there is Khushu', you have connection with God during Salat. Whenever your thoughts drift you away, you lose connection. Your Salat only counts when you are connected. This is why having Khushu' is the most important aspect of Salat. It is not easy to achieve 100% connection, but always try to score above 80%.

2) While standing facing forward, you need to declare (in whispers) what prayer you intend to start, so that the angels (by your sides) mark it for you in your book of deeds. If it is obvious what prayer it is, they don't need you to tell them, but you should say it anyway. As a matter of fact, everything you utter during prayer should be done in whispers so that the angels witness it and record it. Here is an example:

Naway-tu
An Usal-li
Salat [Al-Asr]
lil-la-hi
Ta-ala



I intend to pray [the Asr] prayer for Allah the Exalted.

3) To start, you raise your hands above your shoulders, as a gesture of surrendering to your Lord, and say:

Allah-hu

Akbar

Allah is greater (than anything)



4) Then you fold your arms around your belly to start with R1.



5) Although it is optional, it is good to also initiate the prayer with this supplication, before starting with R1.

A-othu

bil-la-hi

mi-nash

shay-tan

Ar-ra-jeem

A seek refuge with Allah from the
accursed Satan

PART III

The Rak`a's

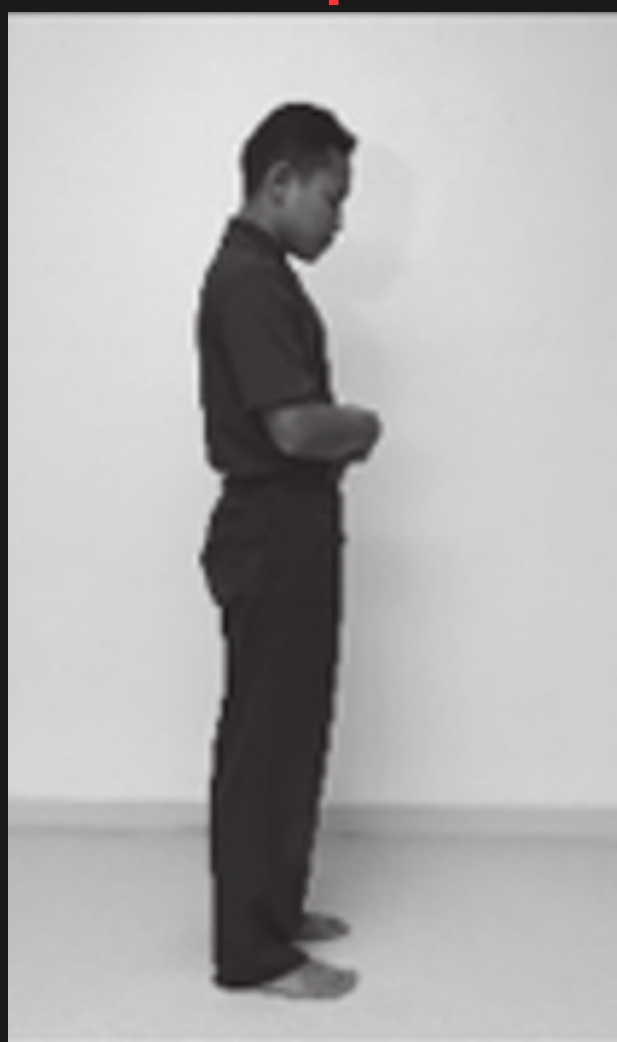
What is a Rak`a?

Salat is an act of worship that includes greeting, praising, and supplicating to Allah; therefore, it is natural that you find yourself in Salat bowing and prostrating to the Most-High.

The combination of standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting covers a sequence of 6 or 7 steps. This sequence of steps is called “Rak`a”.

In this part, I will focus on how to perform the steps in a Rak`a, and in the next part I will cover how to transition between the steps within a Rak`a, and from one Rak`a to another.

step 1



step 2



step 3

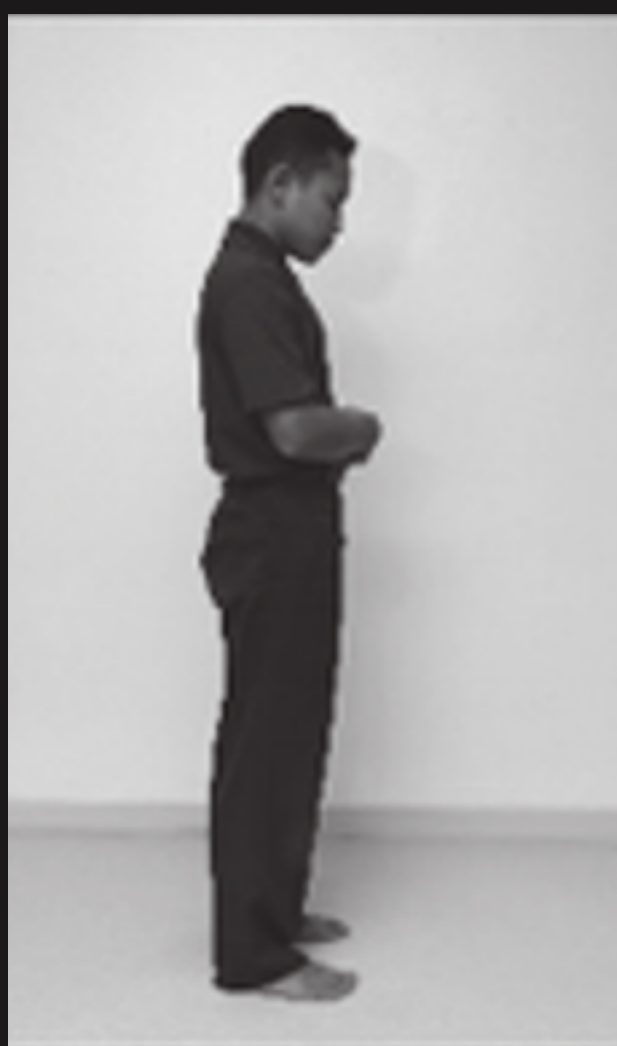


step 4 & 6



step 5 & 7





step 1

Standing 1
(Qiyam 1)

Arms folded

In this step, you have to make one or two recitations:

1.1: Reciting the Fatiha (Opener)
Chapter (This is mandatory in R1-4)

1.2: Reciting any other verses of the
Quran

(It is Sunnah to have this recitation in R1-2 only; meaning, it's a practice that prophet Muhammad added in R1 and R2 of each prayer, to prompt Muslims to memorize verses of the Quran. As a beginner, it is fine to skip this Sunnah until you have memorized some verses of the Quran, but DON'T abandon it.)

So, In step 1 of every R (R1-4) you must recite the Fatiha (the first chapter of the Quran). This chapter consists of seven verses, and these are the words:

1 Bis-mil-lahi
Ar-rah-mani
Ar-ra-heem

In the name of Allah—the Most Gracious, Most Merciful

2 Al-ham-du-lil-lahi
Rabil
Aa-la-meen

(All) praise is (due) to Allah—Lord of the worlds

3 Ar-rah-mani
Ar-ra-heem

The Most Gracious, Most Merciful

4 Ma-lik

Yaum-mid-Deen

Master of the Day of Requital

5 Iy-yaka

Na-budu

Wa iy-yaka

Nas-ta-een

It is You we worship and it is You we
ask for help

6 Ih-dinas-Siratal

Mus-ta-qeem

Guide us to the Straight Path

7 Siratal

La-thee-na

An-amta

Alay-him

Ghay-ril

Magh-doo-bi

Alay-him

Wa-lad-daa-leen

the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have evoked Your wrath nor of those who have gone astray

Once you are done reciting these seven verses, you say:

Aa-meen

Amen



step 2

Bowing
(Ruku`)

Hands at knees
or lower thighs

Recite the following phrase, 3 times:

Sub-ha-na

Rabi-yal

Azeem

Glory to my Lord the Magnificent

Note: The back and head should be straight, at a 90 degree angle to the legs, unless you can't for health reasons.



step 3

Standing 2
(Qiyam 2)

Arms down

Recite the following phrase:

Rab-bana

La-kal

Hamd

Our Lord, (all) praise to you



step 4

Prostration 1
(Sujud 1)

Hands under
shoulders

Recite the following phrase, 3 times:

Sub-ha-na

Rabi-yal

A'la

Glory to my Lord the Most High

Note: While your hands are under your shoulders, your elbows can be positioned away from your body or under your body, depending on how much space you have around you, but your elbows should not touch the ground. Also, your forehead must be touching the ground, and it is Sunnah for the nose to touch as well.



step 5

Sitting 1
(Juloos 1)

Hands on knees

Nothing to recite here, but once you become comfortable with performing Salat, you can add in this step a very short supplication of your choosing, and it can be in your own language.

Note: You can sit on your feet in any of the below positions, while position (c) is Sunnah; hence, the most preferable one.





step 6

Prostration 2
(Sujud 2)

Hands under
shoulders

Recite the following phrase, 3 times:

Sub-ha-na

Rabi-yal

A'la

Glory to my Lord the Most High

Note: During prostration in step 4 and 6, both of your feet must be touching the ground, preferably in the below position.





step 7

Sitting 2
(Juloos 2)

Hands on knees

2 phrases to recite in this step.

7.1 At-Tahiyat Phrase

At-tahi-yatu

Lil-lah-hi

Was-sala-watu

Wat-tayi-bat

As-salamu

Alay-ka

Ay-yu-ha

An-na-bi-yu

Wa rah-matul

Lah-hi

Wa ba-ra-ka-tu

As-salamu

A-lay-na

Wa A-la

Iba-dil

lah-hi

As-sa-li-heen

All greetings to Allah, and all prayers and goodness. Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and his blessings. Peace be upon all of Allah's righteous servants.

7.2 Al-Shahada Phrase

Ash-ha-du

Al-laa

I-laha

Il-lal-lah

Wa Ash-ha-du

An-na

Mu-ham-madan

Ab-du-hu

Wa ra-su-luh

I bear witness there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is his servant and messenger

Note: While reciting the Shahada phrase, it is Sunnah to raise your right-hand index finger.



PART IV

Transitions

All R's cover the first 6 steps. The question is : what do you need to do after step 6 (the second prostration)? Should you transition to step 7 (seated position), or ignore step 7 and transition to the next R (back to standing position)?

Think of an R always having 6 steps, and a prayer consisting of 4 R's in this format:

R1->R2->sit (step7)->R3->R4->sit(step7)
->Ending

This is the basis of a prayer; then adjust for the two exceptions:

Dawn (Fajr) Prayer ends at R2:

R1->R2->sit (step7)->Ending

Sunset (Maghrib) Prayer ends at R3:

R1->R2->sit (step7)->R3->sit (step7)

->Ending

Everytime you transition from one R to another R, and from one step to another step of an R, you need to say:

Allah-hu

Akbar

Allah is greater (than anything)

Except for transitioning between step 2 and 3, where you need to say instead:

Sa-mi-al

Lah-hu

Li-men

Ha-mi-dah

Allah hears those who praise him



PART V

Ending Prayer

Two simple rules:

1) You always end in R4, unless it is

- Dawn (Fajr) Prayer: end in R2
- Sunset (Maghreb) Prayer: end in R3

2) Ending can only come after step 7, while you are in a seated position.

There are 2 parts to the ending:

Part 1 - Ending Supplication

(Optional, but recommended)

You can recite any supplication(s) of your choosing, but a common practice among Muslims to recite the following "Ibrahamic Supplication"

Allah-hum-ma

Sal-li

A-la

Muhammad

Wa A-la

Ally Muhammad

Ka-ma

Sal-lay-ta

A-la

Ibra-heem

Wa A-la

Ally Ibra-heem

In-na-ka

Ha-meed-don

Ma-jeed

Oh Allah, bestow your favor on
Muhammad and on the family of
Muhammad as you had bestowed
Your favor on Ibrahim and on the
family of Ibrahim, You are
Praiseworthy, Most Glorious.

Allah-hum-ma

Ba-rek

A-la

Muhammad

Wa A-la

Ally Muhammad

Ka-ma

Ba-rak-ta

A-la

Ibra-heem

Wa A-la

Ally Ibra-heem

In-na-ka

Ha-meed-don

Ma-jeed

Oh Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as you had blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim, You are Praiseworthy, Most Glorious.

Part 2 - Greeting the Angels
(Mandatory)

There are two angels at your sides recording all of your deeds. You will need to look over your shoulders and greet them.

You start with the right side, then the left side, and you say at each side:

As-sal-lamu

Alay-kom

Wa Rah-ma-tul-lah

Peace be upon you, and (be upon you) the mercy of Allah



Congratulations! You now know how to perform Salat!

PART VI

Witr Prayer

This is a prayer that was added to the five prayers and it should be performed before you go to bed. This a mandatory prayer that, unfortunately, many Muslims have neglected.

From among those who observe it, they are some who tend to do so right after the fifth prayer (Isha prayer), because they fear they might forget to do so before going to bed, and that is fine. At minimum, it consists of only one R.

R1->sit (step7)->Ending

However, it can be odd number of R's (1R, 3R's, 5R's, 7R's,) So, if you want to do 3R's, it will be as such:

R1->R2->R3-> sit (step7)->Ending

In general:

R(odd number)->sit (step7)->Ending

Other aspects of Salat you need to learn:

1. Prayer dress code
2. Ablution (Wudu) and being in a state of purity (Tahara) before starting Salat
3. What breaks your state of purity?
4. Combining and shortening prayers while traveling
5. Prayer allowances for the handicapped
6. Daily prayer time schedule
7. Missing a prayer within its time window
8. Praying in a group or at the masjid (mosque).
9. Additional optional prayers (Nawafil)
10. Doubting if you missed a step while praying.

May God bless you and accept your prayers, and All praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds.