أَلَا بِذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ ٱلْقُلُوبُ

New to Islam? Start here

A gentle guide to the basics,
and how to pray step by step



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This guide covers the basics as the Prophet ﷺ taught them, with a reference for each step. Muslims differ on some small details of the prayer, and all of them are valid. For anything you are unsure about, ask a trusted teacher or the imam at your local masjid.

Qur'an translation: Saheeh International. Hadith references follow sunnah.com. More free tools: remindheart.com

01 YOUR FIRST STEPS

Welcome

مَرْحَبًا

Whether you have just said your shahadah or are taking your first steps, welcome. This guide covers the basics, one small step at a time, so you can start practising with confidence.

THE SHAHADAH

Listen

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

Ash-hadu an lā ilāha illallāh, wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlullāh.

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

When you sincerely say these words, you are a Muslim. The Prophet ﷺ taught that accepting Islam wipes away everything that came before it, so you start with a clean page.

SAHIH MUSLIM 121

Go gently. Nobody learns everything at once. Start with the prayer, learn a little each week, and ask questions. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The religion is easy."

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 39

02

THE SIX PILLARS OF FAITH

What Muslims believe

الإِيمَان

When the angel Jibril asked the Prophet ﷺ what faith (iman) is, he answered with six beliefs. These are the foundations of a Muslim's heart.

1

Allah

There is one God, Allah, with no partner, no equal and no child. He alone deserves worship.

2

His angels

Created from light, they worship Allah and carry out His commands, like Jibril who brought the revelation.

3

His books

Allah sent revelation to His messengers. The Qur'an is the final book, preserved as it was revealed.

4

His messengers

Allah sent prophets to every people, from Adam to Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa. Muhammad ﷺ is the last of them.

5

The Last Day

Everyone will be brought back to life and answer for what they did, and Allah will judge with perfect justice and mercy.

6

Qadr (Allah's decree)

Nothing happens outside Allah's knowledge and will, the good and the hard alike. We do our part and trust Him with the rest.

SAHIH MUSLIM 8 · SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 50

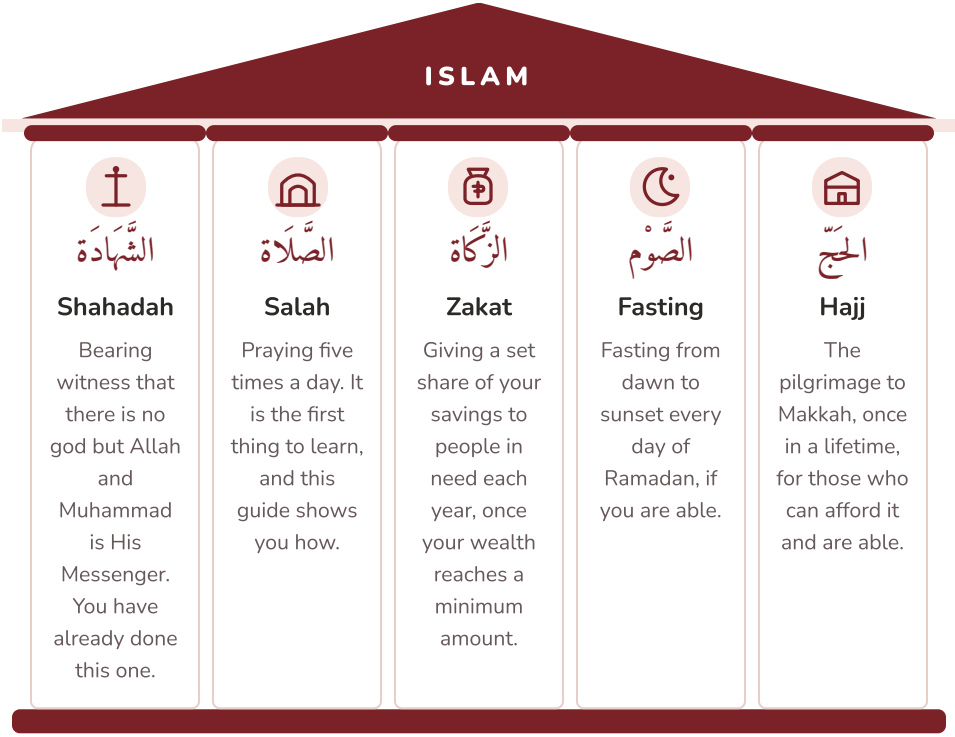
03

WHAT EVERY MUSLIM BUILDS THEIR LIFE ON

The five pillars

أَرْكَانُ الإِسْلَام

Islam is built on five pillars, the actions every Muslim builds their life on.



SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 8

04 THE FULL WASH

Ghusl

الغُسْل

When you accept Islam

Recommended. When Qays ibn Asim came to accept Islam, the Prophet ﷺ told him to have a bath.

SUNAN ABI DAWUD 355

When it's required

After marital relations or a wet dream, and for women when a period or bleeding after childbirth ends. You can't pray until you've done it.

How to do it

1. Make the intention in your heart and say "Bismillah".
2. Wash your hands, then wash your private parts.
3. Do wudhu, the same as for the prayer.
4. Pour water over your head three times, so it reaches the roots of your hair.
5. Wash the rest of your body, starting with the right side, so water reaches everywhere.

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 248

05

WASHING FOR THE PRAYER

Wudhu

الوُضُوء

Before every prayer you need wudhu, a short wash with clean water. Allah describes it in the Qur'an, and the Prophet ﷺ said that cleanliness is half of faith.

AL-MA'IDAH 5:6 · SAHIH MUSLIM 223

Intend and say Bismillah

Make the intention in your heart to do wudhu for the prayer, and begin with "Bismillah".

1

×3

Wash your hands

Wash both hands up to the wrists, three times.

2

×3

Rinse your mouth

Take water into your mouth, swirl it and spit it out, three times.

3

×3

Rinse your nose

Sniff a little water into your nose and blow it out, three times.

4

×3

Wash your face

From the hairline to the chin and from ear to ear, three times.

5

×3 each

Wash your arms

Your right arm up to and including the elbow, then the left, three times each.

6

×1

Wipe your head and ears

With wet hands, wipe over your head from front to back and back again, then wipe your ears, once. 7

×3 each

Wash your feet

Your right foot up to and including the ankle, then the left, three times each. Get between the toes. 8

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 159

AFTER WUDHU, SAY

Listen

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

Ash-hadu an lā ilāha illallāhu waḥdahu lā sharīka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan 'abduhu wa rasūluh.

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone, with no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

SAHIH MUSLIM 234

What breaks wudhu? Using the toilet, passing wind, deep sleep, and anything that requires ghusl. If none of these has happened, your wudhu still counts and you can pray more than one prayer with it.

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 135

06

FIVE MEETINGS WITH ALLAH EACH DAY

The five prayers

الصَّلَوَاتُ الخَمْس

Salah is the heart of a Muslim's day: five short meetings with Allah, each at its own time.

> **Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.**
>
> AN-NISA 4:103

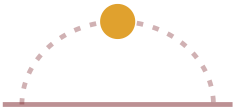


Fajr

DAWN

From first light until sunrise

●● **2 rak'ahs**



Dhuhr

MIDDAY

From just after midday until mid-afternoon

●●●● **4 rak'ahs**



Asr

AFTERNOON

From mid-afternoon until sunset

●●●● **4 rak'ahs**



Maghrib

SUNSET

Just after sunset until the light leaves the sky

●●● **3 rak'ahs**



Isha

NIGHT

From nightfall

●●●● **4 rak'ahs**

Exact times change every day with the sun. Use your local masjid's timetable or a prayer times app.

Before you pray

- You have wudhu
- Your body, clothes and the place you pray are clean
- You are covered: for men, at least from the navel to the knees; for women, everything except the face and hands
- You are facing the qiblah, the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah
- It is the time for that prayer

For sisters: during your period and bleeding after childbirth you don't pray, and you don't make those prayers up later. Missed Ramadan fasts are made up afterwards.

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 321 · SAHIH MUSLIM 335

07

FROM ALLAHU AKBAR TO SALAM

How to pray

صِفَةُ الصَّلَاة

This is a two-rak'ah prayer, like Fajr, from beginning to end. Every prayer is made of these same steps. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Pray as you have seen me pray."

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 631



Still learning the Arabic? That's completely normal. Pray anyway with what you know, reading from this page or your phone if you need to. A man once told the Prophet ﷺ he couldn't memorise any Qur'an, and he taught him to say instead: SubḥānAllāh, wal-ḥamdu lillāh, wa lā ilāha illallāh, wallāhu akbar, wa lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh.

SUNAN ABI DAWUD 832

1



Face the qiblah and intend

Stand facing the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah (the qiblah). Make the intention in your heart for the prayer you are about to pray, for example "the two rak'ahs of Fajr". You don't need to say it out loud.

INTENTION: SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 1

2



Begin with Allahu Akbar

Raise your hands to the level of your shoulders or ears and say:

Listen

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allāhu akbar

Allah is the Greatest

From now on, keep your eyes on the place where your forehead will touch the ground, and focus only on the prayer.

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 735 · SUNAN ABI DAWUD 61

3



Stand and recite

Place your right hand over your left on your chest or just below it. Quietly say the opening dua, then seek refuge in Allah:

Listen

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Subḥānaka-llāhumma wa biḥamdika, wa tabāraka-smuka, wa ta'ālā jadduka, wa lā ilāha ghayruk

Glory be to You, O Allah, and praise. Blessed is Your name, exalted is Your majesty, and there is no god but You.

Listen

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

A'ūdhu billāhi minash-shayṭānir-rajīm

I seek refuge in Allah from Shaytan, the accursed.

RIGHT HAND OVER LEFT: SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 740 · OPENING DUA: SUNAN ABI DAWUD 775

4



Recite Al-Fatihah

Recite Surah Al-Fatihah, the opening chapter of the Qur'an. It is recited in every rak'ah of every prayer, so it is the first thing to learn.

1 بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Bismillāhir-raḥmānir-raḥīm

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful

2 ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

Al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabbil-'ālamīn

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds

3 ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Ar-raḥmānir-raḥīm

The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful

4 مَٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ

Māliki yawmid-dīn

Sovereign of the Day of Recompense

5 إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'īn

It is You we worship and You we ask for help

6 ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Ihdinaṣ-ṣirāṭal-mustaqīm

Guide us to the straight path

صِرَٰطَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِم غَيرِ ٱلمَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِم وَلَا ٱلضَّآلِّينَ ﴿7﴾

Ṣirāṭal-ladhīna an'amta 'alayhim ghayril-maghḍūbi 'alayhim wa laḍ-ḍāllīn

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have earned anger or of those who are astray

At the end, say "Āmīn" (O Allah, accept).

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 756

5



Recite a short surah

In the first two rak'ahs, recite any other part of the Qur'an you know after Al-Fatihah. Surah Al-Ikhlas is short and a lovely one to start with:

قُلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ 1

Qul huwallāhu aḥad

Say, "He is Allah, the One

ٱللَّهُ ٱلصَّمَدُ 2

Allāhuṣ-ṣamad

Allah, the Eternal Refuge

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ 3

Lam yalid wa lam yūlad

He neither begets nor is born

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ 4

Wa lam yakun lahū kufuwan aḥad

Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 757

6



Bow (ruku')

Say "Allāhu akbar" and bow, with your hands on your knees and your back straight and level. Say three times:

Listen

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ

Subḥāna rabbiyal-'aẓīm

Glory be to my Lord, the Most Great

SAHIH MUSLIM 772

7



Rise from bowing

Stand up straight, saying the first line as you rise. Once you are standing still, say the second:

Listen

سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ

Sami'allāhu liman ḥamidah

Allah hears the one who praises Him

Listen

رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ

Rabbanā wa lakal-ḥamd

Our Lord, and to You belongs all praise

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 789

8



Prostrate (sujud)

Say "Allāhu akbar" and go down into prostration, with seven parts of you on the ground: your forehead and nose, both hands, both knees and the toes of both feet. Say three times:

Listen

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

Subḥāna rabbiyal-a'lā

Glory be to my Lord, the Most High

This is when you are closest to Allah. Once you are comfortable, you can add your own duas here, in any language, in voluntary prayers.

SEVEN PARTS: SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 812 · WORDS: SAHIH MUSLIM 772

9



Sit between the two prostrations

Say "Allāhu akbar" and sit up, resting on your left foot with your right foot upright. Say:

Listen

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي

Rabbighfir lī

My Lord, forgive me

SUNAN ABI DAWUD 874

10



Prostrate again

Say "Allāhu akbar" and make a second prostration exactly like the first, saying "Subḥāna rabbiyal-a'lā" three

times.

That completes one rak'ah. Say "Allāhu akbar" and stand up for the next one, starting again from Al-Fatihah.

REPEAT FOR THE SECOND RAK'AH, THEN SIT

11



Sit for the tashahhud

After the second rak'ah, sit as you did between the prostrations, with your hands on your knees or thighs, and recite the tashahhud. Point with your right index finger.

Listen

التَّحِيَّاتُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَوَاتُ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

At-taḥiyyātu lillāhi waṣ-ṣalawātu waṭ-ṭayyibāt. As-salāmu 'alayka ayyuhan-nabiyyu wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh. As-salāmu 'alaynā wa 'alā 'ibādillāhiṣ-ṣāliḥīn. Ash-hadu an lā ilāha illallāh, wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan 'abduhu wa rasūluh.

All greetings, prayers and good things are for Allah. Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. Peace be upon us and upon the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

In a 3 or 4 rak'ah prayer, this is the middle sitting: stop here, say "Allāhu akbar" and stand up for the rest.

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 6265 · POINTING: SAHIH MUSLIM 580

12



Send blessings on the Prophet ﷺ

In the final sitting, after the tashahhud, send blessings on the Prophet ﷺ:

Listen

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ، اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

Allāhumma ṣalli 'alā Muḥammadin wa 'alā āli Muḥammad, kamā ṣallayta 'alā Ibrāhīma wa 'alā āli Ibrāhīm, innaka ḥamīdun majīd. Allāhumma bārik 'alā Muḥammadin wa 'alā āli Muḥammad, kamā bārakta 'alā Ibrāhīma wa 'alā āli Ibrāhīm, innaka ḥamīdun majīd.

O Allah, send prayers on Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You sent prayers on Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim; You are Praiseworthy, Glorious. O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim; You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 3370

13



End with salam

Turn your head to the right and say the salam, then turn to the left and say it again. Your prayer is complete.

Listen

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

As-salāmu 'alaykum wa raḥmatullāh

Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah

SUNAN ABI DAWUD 996 · SUNAN ABI DAWUD 61

08

SAME STEPS, DIFFERENT LENGTHS

2, 3 and 4 rak'ahs

الرَّكَعَات

Every prayer follows the same pattern. The only difference is the number of rak'ahs and where you sit. In the first two rak'ahs you recite Al-Fatihah and a surah; in the third and fourth, Al-Fatihah only.

2 rak'ahs

Fajr

1 + surah → 2 + surah → SIT · SALAM

3 rak'ahs

Maghrib

1 + surah → 2 + surah → SIT → 3 Fatihah → SIT · SALAM

4 rak'ahs

Dhuhr, Asr, Isha

1 + surah → 2 + surah → SIT → 3 Fatihah → 4 Fatihah → SIT · SALAM

FATIHAH ONLY IN THE LAST RAK'AHS: SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 776

Made a mistake or forgot? Don't worry. Allah knows you are learning. Ask someone at your local masjid to pray with you once or twice, and it soon becomes natural.

09

THE MONTH OF THE QUR'AN

Fasting

الصِّيَام

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, when the Qur'an was first revealed. Every day of the month, Muslims fast from dawn (Fajr) until sunset (Maghrib).

> **O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.**
>
> AL-BAQARAH 2:183

Suhoor

BEFORE DAWN

A pre-dawn meal to keep you going.

The fast

DAWN TO SUNSET

No food, drink or marital relations. Guard your tongue and temper too.

Iftar

AT SUNSET

Break your fast, often with dates and water.

If you are ill or travelling (or pregnant or nursing), you may skip days and make them up later. Allah wants ease for you.

AL-BAQARAH 2:185

See when Ramadan starts with the **Ramadan countdown**.

10

GIVING AND THE PILGRIMAGE

Zakat and Hajj

الزَّكَاةُ وَالحَجّ

الزَّكَاة

Zakat

Once a year, if your savings stay above a minimum amount (the nisab) for a full lunar year, you give 2.5% of them to those Allah names in the Qur'an, such as the poor and the needy. Your local masjid can help you work it out.

AT-TAWBAH 9:60

الحَجّ

Hajj

The pilgrimage to Makkah in the month of Dhul Hijjah, once in a lifetime, for whoever is able to make the journey and afford it. There's no rush: it's for when you are ready and able.

ALI 'IMRAN 3:97

11 WHAT TO AVOID

Halal and haram

الحَلَالُ وَالحَرَام

Halal means allowed and haram means forbidden. Most things in life are halal. A few things are clearly haram, and it is worth knowing them from the start.

Halal

Almost everything: fruit, vegetables, grains, fish, dairy, and meat slaughtered in the name of Allah. Ask at your local masjid where people buy halal meat near you.

Haram

- Pork and anything made from it (check gelatine and some sweets)
- Alcohol and anything that intoxicates
- Blood, and animals that died without being slaughtered
- Gambling

AL-MA'IDAH 5:3 · AL-MA'IDAH 5:90

12

KEEPING THE TIES OF KINSHIP

Your family

الأُسْرَة

Becoming Muslim doesn't mean leaving your family. Islam asks you to keep treating your parents and relatives with kindness, even if they are not Muslim.

> **...accompany them in this world with appropriate kindness.**
>
> **LUQMAN 31:15**

When Asma's mother, who was not Muslim, came to visit her, the Prophet ﷺ told her: "Yes, keep good relations with her."

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 2620

You don't have to change your name. Your good character is often the most beautiful way your family will come to understand Islam.

13

REMEMBERING ALLAH THROUGH THE DAY

Everyday words

كَلِمَاتٌ طَيِّبَة

You will hear these a lot. They are small ways of remembering Allah through the day.

Listen

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ

Assalamu alaykum

Peace be upon you. The Muslim greeting. The reply is "Wa alaykum assalam" (and upon you be peace).

Listen

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

Bismillah

In the name of Allah. Said before eating, starting a task, leaving home.

Listen

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

Alhamdulillah

All praise is for Allah. Said when something good happens, after eating, after sneezing, and when asked how you are.

Listen

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ

SubhanAllah

Glory be to Allah. Said when you are amazed by something.

Listen

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ

MashaAllah

What Allah has willed. Said when you admire something or someone.

Listen

إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

In sha Allah

If Allah wills. Said about anything you plan to do in the future.

Listen

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allahu Akbar

Allah is the Greatest. Said in the prayer and in moments of awe.

Listen

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ

Astaghfirullah

I seek Allah's forgiveness. Said after a mistake, and often through the day.

Listen

جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا

JazakAllahu khayran

May Allah reward you with good. The Muslim way of saying thank you.

Listen

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

ﷺ

"May Allah send blessings and peace upon him." Said or written after the Prophet Muhammad's name.

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WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Next steps

الخُطْوَةُ التَّالِيَة

1. **Learn the prayer first.** Start with Al-Fatihah, and pray what you can while you learn.
2. **Find your local masjid.** Introduce yourself to the imam. Many masjids run classes and support groups for new Muslims.
3. **Read the Qur'an with its meaning.** A little each day.
4. **Make dua in your own words.** Any time, in any language. Allah hears you.
5. **Be patient with yourself.** Faith grows step by step, and every step counts.

> **Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.**
>
> AR-RA'D 13:28