



New Muslim 101

Masjid Orientation Guide

As-salaam-alaikum!

May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be Upon You!

New Muslim 101 has created a short orientation guide to help you get a better understanding of the function and services of a typical masjid. We hope this guide helps you gain a better understanding of how a masjid functions, facilities, services, and etiquettes of a typical masjid in America.

If you have any questions, comments or need any help getting situated in your masjid please don't hesitate to contact us or your local imam, masjid administrator or board member.

Thanks,

New Muslim 101

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I. What is a Masjid?

A *masjid* (pronounced MUS-JID) is the center of worship for Muslims. They may be referred to as a *masjid*, *mosque* or an Islamic center. Masjid literally means place of prostration. The core function of a masjid is to establish congregational prayers and to be Houses of *Allah*. Thus, the core purpose of a masjid is to establish the worship of Allah and be a place of spirituality and a means to get closer to Allah.

The first masjid was built by the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) with his son Ismail (Ishmael), peace be upon them both. Allah ordered Ibrahim and his son (peace be upon them both) to build the *ka'bah* (sometimes spelled kabah/kaba), the first masjid in the history of Islam. The literal Arabic within the Quran refers to the *ka'bah* as a house, thus the masjids are houses of Allah—open to all.

And [mention, O Muhammad], when We designated for Abraham the site of the House, [saying], "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform Tawaf and those who stand [in prayer] and those who bow and prostrate.

And proclaim to the people the Hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass –

That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals. So eat of them and feed the miserable and poor.

Then let them end their untidiness and fulfill their vows and perform Tawaf around the ancient House."

-Quran (Chapter 22, Verses 26-29)

As Ibrahim and Ismail were building the ka'bah they made *dua* (supplication/prayer) to Allah for Allah to accept their obedient action of building the *Ka'bah*, asked Allah to name their progeny *muslim*, and for Allah to send a messenger from among the Muslims. Their *dua* was answered by Allah with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his mission and message of Islam. Today, the *Ka'bah* is a testament to Allah's answer to Ibrahim (peace be upon him)'s *dua*. Millions of Muslims from around the world visit the *Ka'bah* in obedience to Allah

and His commands.

And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. And take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. And We charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], "Purify My House for those who perform Tawaf and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]."

And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits - whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day." [Allah] said. "And whoever disbelieves - I will grant him enjoyment for a little; then I will force him to the punishment of the Fire, and wretched is the destination."

And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing."

Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.

Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

-Quran (Chapter 2, Verse 125)

Thus, every time you step into a masjid you're connected by faith to a great lineage of Prophets—Ibrahim, Ismail and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them all). As you step into the masjid you realize that you are in the House of Allah and as a guest and servant of Allah your heart and mind should be upon the worship and obedience to Him alone.

As a generous host welcomes guests, travelers, the homeless and poor, likewise Allah's House is open to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, or gender.

II. Setup and Facilities of a Masjid

Masjids in America's setup, facilities, and layout differ based on a number of things: land size, space, blueprint, architecture, aesthetic design, funding, etc. Most masjids in America however, have basic facilities to facilitate worship in the Houses of Allah.

More modern masjids may have youth facilities like gyms, basketball courts, classrooms, and offices. However, what will be discussed are the basic setup and facilities of a typical American masjid.

Some of the typical facilities include:

1) **Prayer Hall**

(in Arabic, the prayer hall is called a *musallah*, pronounced MOO-SAL-LAH)

Depending on space restrictions, blueprint and layout masjids in America may have different sizes of prayer halls for men and women and accommodations for both men and women.

The sections are divided into a Men's Prayer Hall and a Women's Prayer Hall. Some masjids may normally refer to them as the "Brother's Section" or the "Sister's Section." Some halls (and masjids) may have different entrances for men and women. In addition, you may see a divider between the men's and women's prayer hall which delineates the men and women's section. Women's sections are always behind the men in order to preserve women's modesty and so that men and women both can concentrate on the worship of Allah in peace and without distractions.

Women's prayer section may be in the same hall as the men or may be above the men's section. Again, it depends on the blueprint, layout and facilities of your masjid. All designs, layouts and facility sizes depend on the ideology of the masjid board and leadership. If you have any questions regarding your masjid facilities contact your local imam, board member or masjid administrator.

Below is a diagram of a typical prayer hall set up. The *qiblah*, or prayer direction towards Makkah (Mecca) is shown in the diagram as well as the *mimbar* (place where the imam of the masjid delivers sermons) and the *mihrab* (the place where the imam leads the congregation in prayer). As mentioned before, the layout and facilities may differ according to your masjid, but typically this basic setup is the same in all masjids.

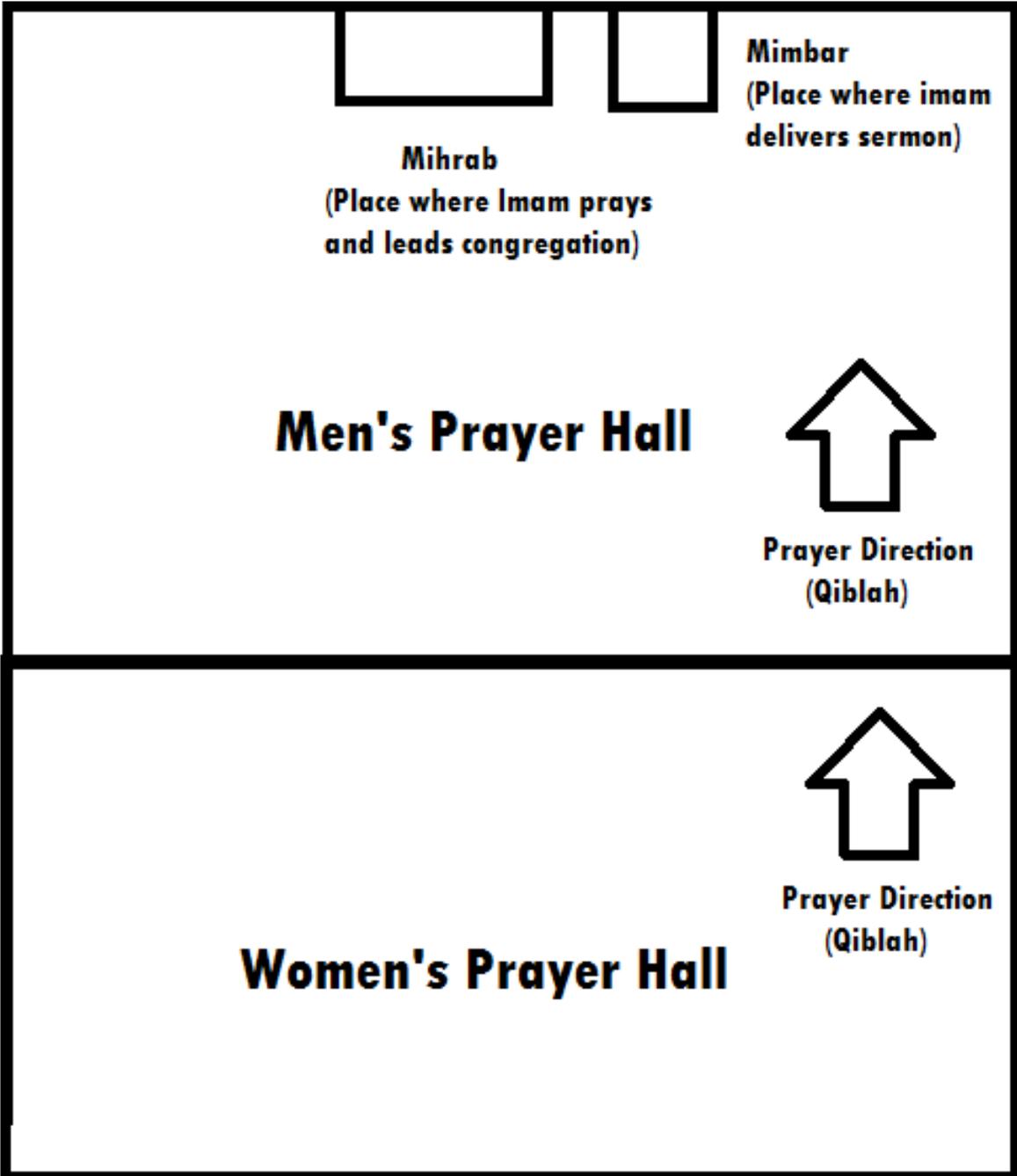


Figure 1.1

Masjid Al-Huda Prayer Hall (Chicago, IL):

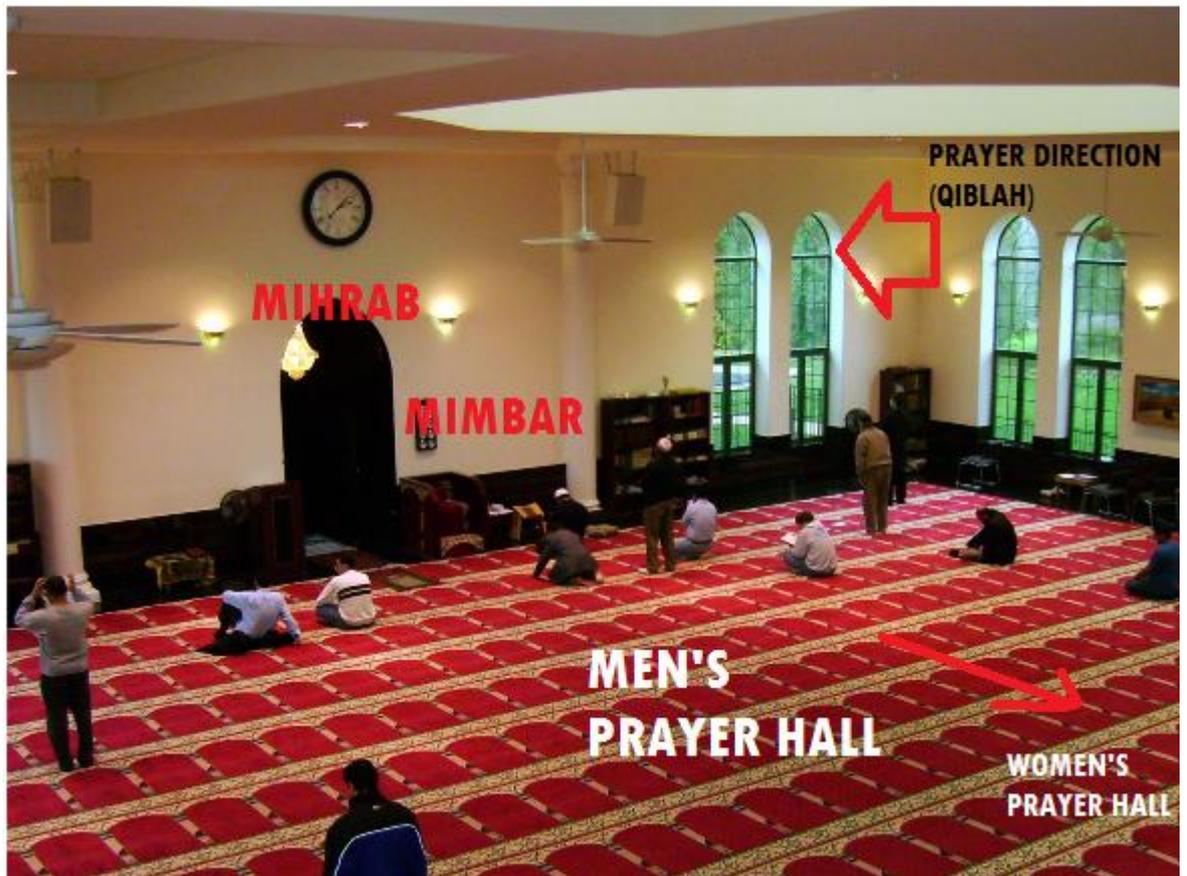


Figure 1.2

2) Wudu Area/Bathrooms

Wudu, the ritual ablution performed before prayer, is required before every prayer. Some masjids have wudu areas with faucets and sinks for you to do ablution in. Most masjids combine the wudu area and bathroom into one facility.

Wudu area at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center:



III. Services of a Typical Masjid

Depending on the capacity of a masjid, a masjid may provide differing services. However, the basic services a masjid provides are the following:

1) Daily Prayer Services (5 Times a Day)

All masjids serve the core purpose and function of establishing prayer. Congregational prayer times may differ from masjid to masjid. Check your local masjid's website, www.islamicfinder.org, or www.salatomic.com to find your local masjid's congregational prayer times

2) Friday Prayer (*Jumah* Prayer)

The Friday Prayer or *Jumah* prayer takes place every Friday at masjids. You will need to check with your local masjid to check what time your masjid performs the Friday prayer. Some larger masjids with larger congregations may have two or three Friday prayers to accommodate more people.

The typical jumah prayer is structured as such:

- 1) **Athan** (call to prayer)
- 2) First Sermon (*Khutbah*)
- 3) Second Sermon (*Khutbah*)
- 4) Two units of Prayer

The Friday prayer sermon or *khutbah* (pronounced KHOOT-BAH) is delivered in English and will have some Islamic terms, verses from the *Quran* and Prophetic traditions (*hadith*) in Arabic in the sermon. The sermon and the prayer should last no more than 30 minutes. However, it will differ from masjid to masjid and imam to imam.

For more information about how a *khutbah* is structured and what is recited during a khutbah please see the appendix for more details.

3) Marriage Contracts/Ceremonies

Your local masjid will perform *nikah* ceremonies and marriage services for you. Contact your local imam or masjid administrator for more information. More developed masjids have pre-marriage counseling and marriage counseling.

4) Funeral Prayer Services

Your local masjid should provide funeral prayer services (**janazah**, pronounced JAH-NA-ZAH). In addition, your masjid should provide you information regarding Muslim cemeteries in your community and instructions on what to do for funeral services, burial rites, and other information.

5) Zakah Collection and Distribution

Your masjid should collect and distribute **zakah** (charity, pronounced ZAH-KAH). Zakah is only eligible to specific people in need. You will need to contact your local imam and masjid administrator for more information regarding the **zakah** collection and distribution policies.

6) Islamic Educational Events and Classes

Your masjid may provide weekend classes, evening classes and/or a full-time or part time Islamic school. Common Islamic school set ups at masjids are in the form of Saturday or Sunday schools in which students from ages 5-14 years of age attend the masjid's Islamic school to learn the basics about Islamic belief, basic Arabic letters, grammar, and vocabulary, Islamic history, **Quran**, and **Hadith**.

There also may be seminars, workshops, and **halaqas** (Islamic classes) for the community. These classes and events may cater to the entire community as a whole or to specific demographics (i.e. men, women, youth, children, etc.). Contact your local masjid for more information about educational programs.

IV. Masjid Etiquette

As the masjid is the House of Allah a Muslim is required to conduct him or herself in accordance to orders of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Masjid etiquette includes the following:

1) Dua (Prayer) Before and Leaving Masjid

When you enter the House of Allah, you make **dua** (supplicate or prayer) to Allah. This reminds you that you are entering a sacred space.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ وَبِوَجْهِهِ الْكَرِيمِ
 وَسُلْطَانِهِ الْقَدِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ
 الرَّجِيمِ، [بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، وَالصَّلَاةُ]
 [وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ]، اللَّهُمَّ
 افْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ.

I take refuge with Allah, The Supreme and with His Noble Face, and His eternal authority from the accursed devil. In the name of Allaah, and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allaah. O Allah, open the gates of Your mercy for me.

When leaving you say:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى
 رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ
 فَضْلِكَ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْصِنِي مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ
 الرَّجِيمِ.

In the name of Allah, and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah. O Allah, I ask You from Your favour. O Allah, guard from the accursed devil.

2) Clothing

As a guest of Allah's House it is important to dress appropriately. Specifically, this means that both men and women must wear clothing that is clean, presentable, and modest. When praying, women should wear the **hijab** (headscarf). Men should ensure that their clothing is neither too tight nor too short.

It is not required to wear a robe (**thobe** in Arabic) or Pakistani, Arab or any ethnic clothing, but the clothing you wear has to be modest, clean and presentable. Pictures of faces or animals, profanity, or inappropriate images cannot be worn in the masjid. Remember as guest of the House of Allah you would want to present yourself in the best state!

3) Taking Off Your Shoes

It is required for you to take off your shoes before entering the masjid. Most masjids have shoe racks where you can place your shoes. This is done to remind yourself you are entering a sacred space.

Musa (Moses, peace be upon him) took off his shoes before he stood before Allah in the Valley of Tuwa:

Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.

-Quran (Chapter 20, Verse 12)

4) Respecting the Prayer Space

It is important while you are within the masjid you respect not only the sanctity of the prayer space but also respect others in the masjid. This includes but is not limited to:

- Keeping talking at a minimum or at a low level as to not disturb others
- Talking outside the prayer hall is okay, but avoid talking too loudly
- Avoid using profanity, gossiping, backbiting in the masjid (this applies to outside the masjid too, but it's even more important in the masjid---the House of Allah!)
- Silencing your cellphone upon entering the masjid
- Do not walk in front of someone praying
- Put your shoes in shoe racks and if one isn't present put them neatly somewhere outside the prayer hall

V. Glossary

1. Allahu Akbar

Pronunciation: AL-LAH-HOO AK-BAR

Means "Allah is Greater." This is said in times of excitement and also at the beginning of prayer and during prayer.

2. As-salaamu-alaikum

Pronunciation: AS-SAL-AAM-OO-ALAY-KOOM

This is the Islamic greeting between Muslims. It means “May peace be upon you.” The response to this greeting is *wa alaikum as-salaam*.

3. Wa alaikum asalaam

Pronunciation: WA-ALAY-KOOM-AS-SALAAM

This is the response to *as-salaam-alaikum*. It means “And may peace be upon you too.”

4. Mashallah

Pronunciation: MA-SHA-AL-LAH

This means “as Allah willed or wishes.” It is said in times of happiness or when responding to good news.

5. Alhamdulillah

Pronunciation: AL-HAM-DOO-LIL-LAH

This means “praise be to Allah.” This is said in times of happiness and is used as form of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah, pronounced THI-KUR) which you can say any time.

6. Astaghfurallah

Pronunciation: AS-TAGH-FUR-AL-LAH

This means “I seek Allah’s forgiveness.” This is said as a form of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and can be said at any time.

7. Bismillah

Pronunciation: BIS-MILL-LAH

This means “In the name of Allah.”

8. Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem

Pronunciation: BIS-MILL-LAH AR-RAH-MAN AR-RAH-HEEM

This means “In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.” This is normally said before any action a Muslim does or before reciting a chapter or verse from the *Quran*.

9. Authubillahi min-ashaytaan ir-rajeem bismillah hir-Rahman-ir-Raheem

Pronunciation: OW-OO-THOO BILLAHI MIN AS-SHAY-TAN IR-RAJ-EEM
BIS-MILL-LAH AR-RAH-MAN AR-RAH-HEEM

This means “I seek refuge with Allah from the Shaytaan, the accursed. In the name of Allah the Most Beneficent the Most Merciful.” This is said before any action a Muslim takes or before reciting a chapter or verse from the *Quran*.

10. Surah

Pronunciation: SOO-RAH

This means “chapter.” The chapters of the *Quran* are referred to as surahs. Each surah has a different title according to the theme of the surah.

11. Ayah

Pronunciation: EYE-AH

This means “verse” or “sign” as in a “sign from Allah.”

12. Dhikr

Pronunciation: THI-KUR

This means “remember.” In a spiritual sense it means the “remembrance of Allah.”

13. Dua

Pronunciation: DOO-AH

This means “supplication” or “prayer.”

14. Insha-Allah

Pronunciation: IN-SHAH-AL-LAH

This means “If Allah wills.” This is said when you plan to do something in the future, i.e. “I plan to go to pray at the masjid tomorrow, insha-Allah”

15. Adhan/Athan

Pronunciation: AD-DAN

This means “the call to prayer.” The *muadhin* of the masjid usually calls the adhan before prayer, followed by the *iqamah* (second call to prayer, pronounced IK-KA-MAH).

16. Imam

Pronunciation: EH-MOM

This means “leader.” This is a title given to the religious scholar/leader of the masjid.

17. Ibadah

Pronunciation: E-BA-DAH

This means “worship.”

18. Iqamah

Pronunciation: E-KA-MAH

This literally means “standing.” It is the second call to prayer.

19. Ithikaf

Pronunciation: EH-TI-CALF

This means to “stay in a place.” This is a spiritual retreat in which one stays in masjid for a period of time—concentrating solely on worship, prayer, and attaining spiritual fulfillment.

20. Qiyam al-Layl

Pronunciation: KEE-YAM-UL-LAY-UL

This literally means “standing at night.” These are extra prayers that can be said at night.

21. Taraweeh

Pronunciation: TA-RA-WEE

These are prayers said during Ramadan in which the Quran is recited from the beginning till the end during the 30 days of Ramadan.

22. Musallah

Pronunciation: MOO-SAL-LAH

This means “the place of prayer.” This refers to the prayer area in a masjid.

23. Wudu

Pronunciation: WUD-DO

This is the ritual ablution before prayer.

24. Hijab

Pronunciation: HI-JAH-BUH

This means “partition.” This is a slang term for the headscarf.

25. Masjid

Pronunciation: MUS-JID

This literally means “place of prostration.” This is a name of a place of prayer, usually a building.

26. Jumah

Pronunciation: JOOM-MAH

This literally means “gathering.” This refers to the Friday prayer which is mandatory upon every Muslim male.

27. Mimbar

Pronunciation: MIM-BAR

This is the area where the imam stands and delivers the **khutbah**

28. Mihrab

Pronunciation: MIH-RAAB

This is the area within the masjid where the imam leads the prayer. The mihrab also delineates the prayer direction (*qiblah*)

29. Qiblah

Pronunciation: KIB-LAH

This term means the direction for prayer, which is Makkah (Mecca). The qiblah in a masjid is usually delineated by the *mihrab* in a masjid.

30. Khutbah

Khutbah, pronounced KOOT-BAH means sermon in Arabic. There are three types of sermons:

1. Khutbatul Jum'ah (the Friday Sermon). This is given immediately before the Jum'ah Salah (Friday Prayer).
2. Khutbatul Eid (the Eid Sermon) This is given immediately after the prayer of the two Eids.
3. Khutbatul Nikah (the marriage sermon). This is given during the marriage ceremony.

31. Musaleen

Pronunciation: MOO-SAL-EEN

This means “those who pray.” This refers to individuals within a masjid who are praying.

*If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact your local imam, masjid administrator, board member or masjid representative. In addition, **New Muslim 101** is your resource and we can help assist you with any help or resources you may need.*

Email us at:

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