

10 STEPS TO DEVELOP KHUSHU' BEFORE SALAH

1: Appreciate The Importance Of Salah

The first step to developing khushū' is to understand and appreciate the importance of ṣalāh itself.

After the obligation of attesting to the Oneness of Allah (tawḥīd), there is no greater commandment in Islam than ṣalāh.

Ṣalāh is the second pillar of Islam and the prime connection between a slave and his Master.

It is the first act which he will be held accountable for on the Day of Judgement: if it is good, he will be saved and will succeed; if it is not good, he will be doomed and be amongst the losers.

Ṣalāh is the crucial factor that distinguishes the believers from the disbelievers. By preserving your ṣalāh, you are preserving your dīn. Maintaining your ṣalāh will give you a special light (nūr) in your heart, face and in your grave. On the Day of Judgement, your ṣalāh will come to your rescue and will be your special 'light'. However, those who do not pray will find themselves with Fir'awn, Qārūn, Hāmān and Ubayy b. Khalaf: the worst of mankind.

Ṣalāh is the purification of the soul. It cleanses your sins and protects you from all harm. Ṣalāh is your oxygen, without which you will die. If you do not perform your ṣalāh, although you may be 'alive' in the physical sense, you are spiritually 'dead'.

Ṣalāh is unique because it was made compulsory upon the Prophet ﷺ and his ummah during the Night Journey and Ascension (laylat al-isrā' wal-mi' rāj). He personally received this commandment without any intermediaries from above the seven heavens.

Even on his deathbed, despite being weak and in agony, the Prophet ﷺ never forgot his ummah. He exhorted, "Ṣalāh, ṣalāh and your slaves." These were his parting words and his final waṣiyyah (last will) to us.

'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās (radiy Allāhu 'anhumā) relates that when 'Umar (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) – the second Caliph of Islam – was stabbed, he carried him to his house along with a group of Anṣārī men. Umar (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) remained unconscious until the morning. A man said, "You won't be able to wake him up except through ṣalāh." So they said to him, "Ṣalāh, O Leader of the Believers!" Upon hearing this, 'Umar (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) opened his eyes and asked, "Have the people prayed?" When they answered in the affirmative, he said, "Indeed there is no share in Islām for the one who abandons ṣalāh." He then performed ṣalāh whilst his wound was bleeding. (Muṣannaf 'Abd al-Razzāq)

Why Do We Perform Salah?

- ✓ To fulfil the purpose of our life i.e. to worship Allah
- ✓ To uphold the command of Allah
- ✓ To remember Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā) and become closer to Him
- ✓ To humble ourselves & express our need to Him
- ✓ To appreciate and show gratitude to Allah
- ✓ To converse privately with the Lord of the worlds
- ✓ To separate ourselves from those in kufr (disbelief)
- ✓ To safeguard ourselves from sins and evil deeds
- ✓ To purify our souls
- ✓ To earn magnificent rewards in this world & the hereafter
- ✓ To have our sins forgiven
- ✓ To renew our pledge with Allah and affirm our commitment to Him
- ✓ To prevent our hearts from hardening
- ✓ To acquire Allah's happiness and love
- ✓ To be given the opportunity to see Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā) in Jannah
- ✓ To fill our lives with peace and comfort, and to help us when we are stressed, worried or feeling down

“When the slave rectifies two of his qualities, everything else will be rectified:

(1) his ṣalāh and

(2) his tongue.”

Yunus b. 'Ubayd (rahimahullāh)

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2: Attain the Ma'rifah of Allah

One of the greatest means of attaining khushū' in ṣalāh is the ma'rifah of Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā).

Ma'rifah refers to a deep awareness and knowledge of Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā). The greater your knowledge of Allah, the greater the level of khushū' you will develop.

Knowledge of Allah is a prerequisite for worshipping Him. Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā) states, "I only created jinn and men so that they worship Me" (51:56). Worshipping Allah means submitting yourself to Him, humbling yourself to Him and loving Him. However, how can we love Him if we do not know Him?

"What does one know if one does not know Allah ('azza wa jall) and His Messenger (ṣall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam)? What truth has he recognised if this truth has eluded him? What knowledge has one gained and what action has one obtained if one has failed to know Allah, failed to act for His pleasure, failed to know the path to Him and failed to know what is in store for him once he reaches Him?" – Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh)

What should the ma'rifah of Allah lead to?

A deep awareness and knowledge of Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā) will make you shy of Allah, increase your love for Him and attach your heart to Him. You will be left in awe of Him and will always long to meet Him. You will repeatedly turn to Him broken in repentance. You will hastily run away from the creation to enjoy seclusion with Him.

Striving to attain these qualities is a continuous effort, and not a single struggle. It is a lifelong journey that will only end when we meet Him and He is pleased with us, inshāAllāh.

"There is no life and no peace for the hearts unless they become deeply aware of their Creator, Lord and God through His Names, Attributes and Actions; and through this process (of getting to know Him), He becomes more beloved to them than everything else." – Ibn Abī al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī (raḥimahullāh)

How can you attain the ma'rifah of Allah?

1) Through tadabbur:

Tadabbur is to reflect and ponder on the 'āyāt' (verses) of the Noble Qur'ān.

2) Through tafakkur:

Tafakkur is to reflect on the numerous 'āyāt' (signs) of Allah that surround us. Allah says, "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth" (41:53).

The Qur'ānic verses (āyāt) continuously remind us of the many signs (āyāt). These include the sun, moon, stars, sky, rain, animals, mountains and the human being himself.

3) Through His Beautiful Names.

This is only possible through a deep understanding of Allah's Excellent Names, their Majesty and their Perfection; and realising that He is the Only One to whom these Names belong.

Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh) wrote, "The key to the da'wah of the Messengers and the essence of their Message, is knowing Allah through His Names, His Attributes, and His Actions. This is the foundation which the rest of the Message, from beginning to end, is based upon."

Allah said, "To Allah Alone belong the most Beautiful Names, so call on Him by them." (7:180) The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Indeed Allah has 99 Names; whoever preserves them will enter Paradise" (Muslim).

Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh) wrote, "There is no greater need of the soul than its need to know its Creator and Originator. And there is no way to achieve this except through knowing His Attributes and Names. The more a slave knows them, the more he will know Allah ('azza wa jall), the more he will seek Him and the closer he will be to Him.

Similarly, the more ignorant the slave is of His Names and Attributes, the more ignorant, disliked and further away from Him he will be. The status which the slave enjoys in the eyes of Allah is dependent on the status the slave himself accords Allah in his heart. Thus, journeying to Allah through the path of His Names and Attributes is truly an amazing matter. The doors it opens are astounding."

Throughout your ṣalāh, bring the rich meanings of Allah's Names to the forefront of your mind. Doing this will help you feel that you are directly conversing with Him, and thereby it will increase your closeness to Him.

"Whoever attains the recognition of Allah through His Names, Attributes and Actions, will undoubtedly love Him." – Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh)

4) By worshipping Him as much as possible.

Ma'rifah itself is one of the greatest forms of worship. Other acts of worship – including dhikr, du'ā', reciting the Qur'ān and ṣalāh – will increase your ma'rifah. It's a cycle: the more you know Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā), the more you will worship Him. And the more you worship Him, the more you will know Him.

Performing ṣalāh with khushū', is one of the greatest means of attaining His ma'rifah.

In summary, increasing your knowledge of Allah is one of the best ways to achieve khushū'. Once you get to know Him – through His signs, through His Names, through His Book and through worshipping Him – your awe, veneration and love of Him will increase. Your own self-importance will meanwhile decrease. Both of these will help your body and heart to humble themselves to Allah and allow you to taste the sweetness of khushū'.

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3: Stop Sinning

To attain khushū', you have to push yourself to stop sinning by protecting your organs; in particular your eyes, tongue, and heart. Safeguard your eyes against looking at ḥarām, whether online or offline. Stop your tongue from backbiting, slandering, swearing, obscene language and saying hurtful things. Keep good company who will help you to protect yourself. Protect yourself from eating ḥarām food, including that which is earned from unlawful means.

The īmān in your heart has a special nūr (light). The more nūr the heart has, the greater the nūr of your actions and words will be. Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh) explains that there are some believers whose actions ascend up to Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā), and the nūr of their deeds is like the light of the sun. It shines brightly with the nūr from their hearts. The nūr will keep them steady on the ṣirāṭ (bridge over Hell-fire) and will guide them to Paradise. Of the various deeds, ṣalāh in particular is a 'nūr' as stated by the Prophet ﷺ (Muslim).

Ṣalāh brings nūr in your heart; nūr in your face; nūr in your grave and nūr in the hereafter. Observe those who pray with complete khushū'. You will notice that these people have abundant nūr on their faces. This is the same nūr which illuminates the heart and opens the doors of ma'rifah (knowledge) of Allah al-Nūr (The Ultimate Light). It is this nūr that also helps you to enjoy the sweetness of worship.

Rust on Hearts

This 'nūr' of the heart is extinguished through sins, especially the sins of the eyes. The sins block goodness and nūr from penetrating into the heart. This is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Verily, when the slave commits a sin, a black dot appears on his heart. When he desists, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he sins again, it increases until it covers his heart. And that is the rān (rust) which Allah mentioned: 'No indeed! Rather what they have been doing has rusted their hearts (83:14)'" (Tirmidhī).

Ibn Rajab (raḥimahullāh) explains that the accumulation of rust on their hearts veils them from His ma'rifah (knowledge and deep awareness of Him), thereby, preventing them from becoming acquainted with Him. It hinders them from having vigilance (murāqabah) of Him (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā), being mindful of Him and being aware of His presence in this world. The consequence of their hearts being veiled in this world is that they will be 'veiled' and blocked from seeing Him in the next. Hence why Allah says in the next āyah, "No indeed! They will surely be veiled on that Day from their Lord" (83:15).

"Do not be of those who curse Shayṭān in public, and obey him in private." – 'Umar b. 'Abdul-'Azīz (raḥimahullāh)

Sin after sin turns the heart into a sieve, preventing it from holding goodness. Unless you seek forgiveness and make sincere repentance, your heart will die. In this manner, praying ṣalāh with khushū' will become impossible, because a 'dead' heart cannot humble itself nor submit to its Master ('azza wa jall).

Fighting your nafs and subjugating it is essential to attaining khushū' in ṣalāh. Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh) explains that for a servant to remain present in his ṣalāh and to be occupied with his Lord, he must overcome his lust and desires. He asks, 'How can a heart – which is overcome by lust, captivated by desires, and is a stronghold of shayṭān – be saved from whispers and distractions?'

Lowering the Gaze

We should lower our gazes and stay away from looking at anything which incites lust, especially when we are browsing the internet. This includes being very selective of who we follow on social media. Likewise, we should lower our gazes when we are outside the home, walking in the streets and in the workplace.

Al-Rabī' b. Khuthaym (raḥimahullāh) was so strict in keeping his gaze lowered that some people thought he was blind. For twenty years, he was a regular visitor to the house of 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu). Whenever the maidservant would see him, she would remark to Ibn Mas'ūd, "Your blind friend has come," and Ibn Mas'ūd (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) would laugh at her remark. When Rabī' would knock on the door, the maidservant would go out and see him, head down and with his gaze lowered. When Ibn Mas'ūd (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) would see Rabī', he would say, quoting the Qur'ān, "And give good news to the humble.' (22:34). If Muḥammad ﷺ had seen you, he would have loved you."

Three Benefits of Lowering the Gaze

Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh) explains the benefits of lowering the gaze:

- 1) Tasting the sweetness and joy of īmān. This sweetness is far greater than the sweetness of what you averted your gaze from, because when you give up something for the sake of Allah (subḥānahū wa ta'ālā), He replaces it with something far better.
- 2) The heart becomes illuminated, thereby increasing your insight (firāsah) as you are able to see through the light (nūr) of your heart what others cannot see.
- 3) It strengthens the heart, makes it steadfast, and makes one courageous.

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4: Soften Your Heart

A sick, heedless and hard heart is one of the greatest reasons for the lack of khushū' in ṣalāh. When the heart is rectified, the actions are also rectified as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There is a lump of flesh in the body: when it is sound, the whole body is sound and when it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Truly, it is the heart" (Bukhārī).

Those with hardened hearts are condemned by Allah ('azza wa jall): "So is one whose heart Allah has opened up for Islam and he is upon a light from his Lord (like one whose heart rejects it)? Then woe to those whose hearts are too hard to remember Allah. They have clearly lost their way" (39:22).

In another āyah, Allah ('azza wa jall) warns His believers of the hardening of the heart: "Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth" (57:16)?

And in the next āyah, Allah ('azza wa jall) says, "Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its lifelessness. We have made clear to you the signs so that perhaps you will understand" (57:17).

Ibn Kathīr (raḥimahullāh) explains how this āyah indicates that Allah ('azza wa jall) softens hardened hearts, guides those who are confused after they were astray, and alleviates hardships after they have become unbearable. Just as Allah brings the dead dry earth back to life by sending down abundant rain, He also guides the hardened hearts with the proofs and evidences of the Qur'ān. By inserting the light of īmān into these hearts, these hearts are softened after previously being blocked.

Therefore, do not give up. Even if you have struggled your entire life with khushū', have hope and beg Allah ('azza wa jall) to soften your heart and make it receptive to īmān, the Qur'ān and every form of good.

How to Soften a Hard Heart

a) Frequently remember Allah with your tongue & heart

Allah ('azza wa jall) says, "Truly it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts find peace" (13:28). Dhikr is one of the greatest means of protecting a heart from hardening. This is because excessive talking about other than Allah is one of its leading causes. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Do not talk too much without the remembrance of Allah. Truly, excessive talking without the remembrance of Allah hardens the heart; and the furthest of people from Allah is the hard-hearted person" (Tirmidhī).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "For everything there is a polish, and the polish of the heart is the remembrance of Allah" (Bayhaqī).

Ibn al-Qayyim (raḥimahullāh) explains that the heart rusts like copper and silver. Moreover, just as the heart can rust, it can also be polished through dhikr, to the extent that it can shine like a crystal mirror. Thus, when one neglects dhikr, the heart rusts, and when one remembers Allah, it shines. There are two things which cause a heart to rust: heedlessness (ghaflah) and sin. Conversely, the heart can be polished by two things: dhikr and istighfār (seeking forgiveness).

b) Avoid laughing excessively

Excessive laughing hardens the heart. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Do not laugh excessively as excessive laughter deadens the heart" (Tirmidhī).

c) Remember death frequently

The heart of one who is heedless of death and has excessive hope is dead. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures," i.e. death (Tirmidhī).

'Abdullāh b. 'Umar (radiy Allāhu 'anhumā) said, "I was with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. A man from among the Anṣār came to him and greeted the Prophet. Then he said, 'O Messenger of Allah, which of the believers is best?' He ﷺ said, 'He who has the best character amongst them.' He said, 'Which of them is the smartest?' He ﷺ said, 'The one who remembers death the most and is best in preparing for it. Those are the smartest'" (Ibn Mājah).

d) Visit the graveyards and reflect on the situation of its residents

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "I used to forbid you from visiting the graves but (now) visit them, for it truly reminds you of the hereafter" (Tirmidhī).

When 'Uthmān (radiy Allāhu 'anhu) would stop at a grave, he would cry until his beard was soaked (in tears). It was said to him, "Paradise and Hell-fire are mentioned, and you do not cry, yet you cry because of this?" So he said, "Indeed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'Indeed the grave is the first stage of the hereafter. So, whoever is saved from it, then what comes after it is easier than it. And whoever is not saved from it, then what comes after it is worse than it.'" He said, "And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'I have not seen any sight except that the grave is more horrible than it'" (Ibn Mājah).

e) Recite the Qur'ān

Allah ('azza wa jall) says, "We send down in the Qur'ān that which is a cure and mercy for the believers..." (17:82).

Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ (raḥimahullāh) said, "Five things cure the heart: reciting the Qur'ān with tadabbur (reflection), an empty stomach, the night prayer, humbly supplicating to Allah ('azza wa jall) before dawn, and keeping the company of the righteous."

f) Feed the poor and stroke the head of the orphan

A man once complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about the hardness of his heart so the Messenger ﷺ said to him, "If you want to soften your heart then feed the poor and stroke the head of the orphan" (Aḥmad).

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5: Increase Your Time in Private Worship

Another means of attaining khushū' in ṣalāh is to engage in 'ibādah, especially in private. Just you and Allah ('azza wa jall). No one else.

You may perform many acts of 'ibādah, but still not experience their sweetness. Rectify this by increasing your private worship. Private worship is one of the best ways to attain sincerity and protect yourself from hypocrisy. Once your heart is purified, you will taste the sweetness of īmān and worship.

Imām Mālik (raḥimahullāh) said, "Whoever would like to have peace in his heart, and be saved from the agonies of death and the terrors of the Day of Judgement, then let his private deeds be greater than his public ones."

The Nafs Loves Praise

Our inner self (nafs) rages inside of us. It loves praise and hates criticism. Sometimes it insidiously manifests itself when we mention our private worship in casual conversation with someone. We must, however, fight this. We should avoid mentioning our private acts of worship and maintain it as a special 'secret' between us and Allah ('azza wa jall). Sufyān al-Thawrī (raḥimahullāh) said, "When the servant performs a deed in private, Shayṭān keeps at him until he mentions it. It then moves from the records of private deeds to the record of public deeds."

However, this does not mean that every deed should be done only in private. On the contrary, numerous deeds have to be performed communally and, therefore, in public. Nevertheless, we should strive to have a collection of 'secret deeds,' deeds that no one has knowledge of but Allah ('azza wa jall).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Whoever amongst you is able to have hidden good deeds, then let him do so" (Muṣannaf b. Abī Shaybah).

Be careful of 'ujb

Conducting deeds in private may seem like an act that is free from risks. It is not, and you should be careful of your nafs. Just like you ought to be wary of riyā' (showing off) when you worship Allah in public, you should be wary of 'ujb (self-admiration) when you worship Allah in private.

'Ujb is to be impressed with yourself and your feats. 'Ujb can lead to pride (kibr). This pride can lead to you comparing your actions to others, and start regarding your deeds to be better than theirs. You may, as a result, start looking down on them. Consequently, instead of purifying the soul, your private deeds lead to the destruction of the soul.

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6: Persistently Ask Allah for Khushu' and Do Not Give Up

Turn to Allah ('azza wa jall) the Almighty with humility and beg Him to grant you the ability to perform your ṣalāh with khushū'. Have certainty in your heart that He will respond, as He so promised: "When My servants ask you about Me, truly I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me; so let them respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may be guided" (2:186).

You can make du'ā' in your own language and ask Allah to bless you with khushū'. Alternatively, you may wish to memorise the following supplications of our beloved Messenger ﷺ and ask Allah ('azza wa jall) through them:

اللَّهُمَّ اتِ نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا ، وَزَكِّهَا أَنْتَ خَيْرُ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ، أَنْتَ وَلِيِّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ ، وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ ، وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَسْبَعُ ، وَمِنْ دَعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهَا

O Allah grant my soul taqwā (piety and mindfulness) and purify it, for You are the Best of those who can purify it. You are its Protector and Master. O Allah, I seek Your protection from knowledge which does not benefit, a heart which does not submit, a soul which is not satisfied, and a supplication which is not accepted (Muslim).

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ صَلَاةٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ

O Allah, I seek Your protection from a prayer which does not benefit (Abū Dāwūd).

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي لَكَ شَكَرًا ، لَكَ ذِكْرًا ، لَكَ رَهَابًا ، لَكَ مَطْوَعًا ، إِلَيْكَ مُخْبِتًا أَوْهَا مُنِيبًا

My Lord, make me one who is extremely grateful to You, who remembers you always, who perpetually fears You, who is fully obedient to You, who is humble before You, who constantly cries and pleads with You, and who frequently turns to You in repentance (Abū Dāwūd).

اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ ، وَشُكْرِكَ ، وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ

O Allah, help me to remember You, be grateful to You and worship You in an excellent manner (Abū Dāwūd).

Never Give Up!

Making the human lose hope is one of Shayṭān's most powerful tricks. You might think: "This khushū' thing is not for me. I've tried it, but I keep getting distracted." Do not give in to this trick and continue to try. On some days your level of khushū' will feel strong, whilst on others, you may not feel it at all. Despite all of this, continue to work on it and do not ever give up.

"I struggled with ṣalāh for 20 years, and then I enjoyed it for the next 20 years." – Thābit al-Bunānī (raḥimahullāh)

"I forced my nafs (inner self) to go to Allah whilst it was crying, until I was able to take it to Him whilst it was laughing." – Abū Zayd (raḥimahullāh)

Strive for a balance

Achieving a balance is not always easy. Try to strike a balance between pushing yourself and over-doing it. Push yourself and fight your nafs to pray ṣalāh, working on both the quality and the quantity of your ṣalāh. At the same time, do not burden yourself with it so much that you find it challenging to maintain. For instance, you may attend an imān-boosting lecture and therefore decide to get up an hour before Fajr to pray tahajjud. The first day or week may pass smoothly, but by the second week, you might start feeling like it is too much; you do not feel like waking up at all anymore, not even for 10 minutes.

Rather than immersing yourself fully, build yourself up gradually over time. Try to be consistent as consistency is the key. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The best deeds in the sight of Allah are those which are constant, even if they are few" (Bukhārī).

Accordingly, do not take an 'all-or-nothing' attitude. If your inner voice is saying, 'Either I'm going to pray all of my voluntary prayers or none at all,' then remember that it is better to pray some of them than to pray none of them.

"Indeed, these hearts have their ebbs and flows: when they are soaring, impose on them the voluntary acts; and when they are experiencing a downturn, impose on them the obligatory acts." – 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu)

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7: Act Upon the Etiquettes of the Masjid & Respond to the Adhan

The Etiquettes of Going to the Masjid

The etiquettes of attending the masjid are a crucial preparation for ṣalāh. Adhering to these is indicative of the respect and esteem you accord ṣalāh in your heart. They will also prepare you psychologically for your standing in front of the Supreme Creator.

a) Perform wuḍū thoroughly in accordance to the sunnah at home

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “No man purifies himself, and does it thoroughly, then goes to the masjid, except that Allah records a good deed for him for every step he takes, raises him a degree for it, and wipes away a sin from him for it” (Muslim).

b) Avoid smelling foul

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever has eaten garlic, onion or leek should stay away from our masjid, for indeed the angels are troubled by what the children of Ādam are troubled by” (Muslim).

c) Beautify yourself

Allah (‘azza wa jall) said, “O Children of Ādam, beautify yourselves at every masjid” (7:31). The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty” (Muslim). Apply perfume (men only), and wear clean and appropriate clothing to the masjid.

d) Say the du‘ā’ for leaving the house and the du‘ā’ for walking to the masjid

When Leaving the Home #1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ، لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

In the Name of Allah, I have placed my trust in Allah. There is no power (in averting evil) or strength (in attaining good) except through Allah.

When Leaving the Home #2

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَضِلَّ أَوْ أُضَلَّ ، أَوْ أَزِلَّ أَوْ أُزَلَ ، أَوْ أَظْلِمَ أَوْ أُظْلِمَ ، أَوْ أَجْهَلَ أَوْ يُجْهَلَ عَلَيَّ

O Allah, I seek Your protection from misguiding others or being misguided; from erring or others causing me to err; from oppressing others or being oppressed; and from acting ignorantly or others acting ignorantly towards me.

Whilst Going to the Masjid

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ فِي قَلْبِي نُورًا ، وَفِي بَصَرِي نُورًا ، وَفِي سَمْعِي نُورًا ، وَعَنْ يَمِينِي نُورًا ، وَعَنْ يَسَارِي نُورًا ، وَفَوْقِي نُورًا ، وَتَحْتِي نُورًا ، وَأَمَامِي نُورًا ، وَخَلْفِي نُورًا ، وَاجْعَلْ لِي نُورًا

O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my sight and light in my hearing. Place light on my right and place light on my left. Place light above me and place light beneath me. Place light in front of me, place light behind me and grant me light. (Bukhārī 6316, Muslim 763)

e) Walk with calmness and serenity

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When you hear the iqāmah, walk to prayer with calmness and dignity, and do not hurry. Pray whatever you are able to pray and complete whatever you miss” (Bukhārī).

f) Enter the masjid with your right foot and recite the du‘ā’

When Entering the Masjid

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي ، اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ

In the Name of Allah. Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah. O Allah, forgive my sins. O Allah, open the gates of Your mercy for me.

g) Perform taḥiyyat al-masjid

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When one of you enters the masjid, he should not sit until he has prayed two rak‘āhs” (Bukhārī).

h) Go early so that you can sit in the first row and preferably at the right side of the imām.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “If the people knew what is the reward of announcing the call for the prayer and of being in the first row (in the congregation), and then they found no other way to get this privilege except by casting lots, they would certainly cast lots for it” (Bukhārī).

He ﷺ also said, “Indeed Allah and His Angels send blessings on the right side of the rows” (Abū Dāwūd).

i) Make the intention to wait for ṣalāh

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The servant is constantly in prayer so long as he is in his place of worship waiting for the prayer. The Angels say, ‘O Allah, pardon him. O Allah, have mercy upon him...’” (Muslim).

j) Exit the masjid with your left foot and recite the du‘ā’

Ibn ‘Umar (radiy Allāhū ‘anhumā) used to enter with his right foot first and exit with his left foot first (Bukhārī).

When Leaving the Masjid

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

In the Name of Allah. Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah. O Allah, I ask You from Your bounty. O Allah, protect me from the rejected Shaytān.

Absorb the Adhān into Your Heart

Always hearing a particular sound can make us indifferent to it. As it melds into the background, we may fail to appreciate its significance.

Imām al-Ghazālī (rahimahullāh) explains that on hearing the mu’addhin’s call to prayer, remind yourself about how terrifying the call for the Day of Judgement will be. Be eager and prepare yourself physically and spiritually for this call (i.e. the adhān) in this world. If you are of those who hastened to respond to this call in this world, then know that your name will be called out gently on that Terrifying Day.

Another feeling you may experience whilst listening to the adhān is calm and joy. Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullāh) explains that if your heart leaps with joy when you hear the adhān in the dunyā, then only bliss and triumph will accompany your ‘call’ on the Day of Reckoning. It is for this reason that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Bilāl, give us comfort through ṣalāh” (Aḥmad). As his happiness lay in ṣalāh, he was eager to enter it and would ask Bilāl (raḍiy Allāhu ‘anhu) to commence it by delivering the adhān.

Respond to the Adhān

Responding attentively to the mu’adhdhin while contemplating on the inner and deeper meanings of the words will help you attain khushū’ in your ṣalāh:

After the Mu’addhin says...	You say...
الله أكبر (Allah is the Greatest.)	الله أكبر (Allah is the Greatest.)
أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله (I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah.)	أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله (I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah.)
أشهد أن مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللهِ (I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.)	أشهد أن مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللهِ (I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.)
حي على الصلاة (Come to Ṣalāh.)	لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله (There is no power to achieve good or might to avert evil except through Allah.)
حي على الفلاح (Come to success.)	لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله (There is no power to achieve good or might to avert evil except through Allah.)
الله أكبر الله أكبر (Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest.)	الله أكبر الله أكبر (Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest.)
لا إله إلا الله (There is no god worthy of worship except Allah.)	لا إله إلا الله (There is no god worthy of worship except Allah.)

1)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ instructed us to repeat the words of the mu’adhdhin during ṣalāh. This is with the exception of the following phrase “...when he says حي على الفلاح ، حي على الصلاة ، say: لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله. If he says it from his heart, he shall enter Paradise” (Muslim).

Al-Ṭibī (rahimahullāh) wrote, “The meaning of حي على الصلاة ، حي على الفلاح is come with your exterior and interior to guidance and triumph immediately. Therefore, it is only appropriate that one (responds to this) by saying that this is a great matter which – due to my weakness – I am unable to carry out unless Allah (‘azza wa jall) allows me to, through His might and power.”

The phrase لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله is one of the treasures of Paradise (Tirmidhī). Imām al-Nawawī (rahimahullāh) explains that this is because it embodies complete submission, the entrusting of one’s affairs and true obedience of Allah. Thus, this phrase acknowledges that Allah is the only Creator and none can turn back His Command, and that the slave is powerless in his own affairs.

What does لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ mean?

A slave cannot move from one situation to another (ḥawl), nor does he have the strength (quwwah) to do this except by the will and help of Allah ('azza wa jall).

There is no power to stop sinning/avert evil, nor is there any strength to be obedient/attain good except by the will and help of Allah.

After the Adhān

Following the completion of the adhān, recite the following phrases (in this order):

2)

وَأَنَا أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ، رَضِيتُ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا ، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولًا ، وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا

I also bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah. He is Alone and He has no partner whatsoever, and that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and His Messenger. I am satisfied with Allah as my Lord, with Muḥammad as my Messenger, and with Islam as my religion.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “If anyone says [the above] on hearing the mu’adhhdhin, his sins will be forgiven” (Muslim).

3)

...اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ ، وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When you hear the mu’adhhdhin calling for the prayer, repeat his words then send blessings upon me. The one who sends blessings upon me once, Allah will send 10 blessings upon him” (Muslim).

4)

اللَّهُمَّ رَبِّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْقَائِمَةِ ، آتِ مُحَمَّدًا الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ ، وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا الَّذِي وَعَدْتَهُ

O Allah, Lord of this perfect call and established prayer, grant Muḥammad the status (the highest station in Paradise) and pre-eminence (superiority over the rest of the creation), and resurrect him to the praiseworthy station that You have promised him.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever says [the above] after the adhān shall receive my intercession on the Day of Judgement” (Bukhārī).

5)

After the adhān and before the iqāmah you should make du‘ā’, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Du‘ā’ is not rejected between the adhān and the iqāmah” (Tirmidhī).

5 FOR 5

Glad tidings of Paradise.

Forgiveness of all sins.

Ten blessings from Allah.

Intercession of the Prophet

Acceptance of du‘ā’.

After al-Rabī b. Khuthaym (raḥimahullāh) became partially paralysed, he used to go to the Masjid helped by two men. It was said to him, “O Abū Yazīd! You may pray at home, as you are excused.”

He said, “Whoever hears عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ should answer it even by crawling.”

10 STEPS TO DEVELOP KHUSHU' BEFORE SALAH

8: Pray in the Congregation & Do Not Delay

Pray on Time

Plan your day around ṣalāh. Instead of trying to fit ṣalāh in your busy schedule, make your day revolve around ṣalāh, and aim to always pray on time. Praying ṣalāh at its beginning time will be an indication of you – mentally and physically – giving it the importance it deserves. It will also safeguard against rushing through ṣalāh as you won't worry about whether or not you have sufficient time. Allah (‘azza wa jall) says, “So woe to those who pray, but are heedless of their prayers” (107:4-5). According to the scholars, this either refers to (a) those who neglect their prayer by not praying at all, or (b) those who delay it all or most of the time.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “That is the ṣalāh of the hypocrite. He sits watching the sun, until when it is between the horns of the Shayṭān, he stands and pecks up and down [i.e. rushes] in the four rak‘ahs of prayer, and hardly remembers Allah in them” (Muslim).

The Prophet ﷺ always hastened to the masjid when it was time for ṣalāh. Occasionally, he would be spending time with his family, but on hearing the mu‘addhin’s call to prayer, he would immediately get up and leave them. ‘Ā’ishah (radīy Allāhu ‘anha) says, “He ﷺ would be in the service of his family and when he would hear the adhān, he would leave” (Bukhārī).

Yearning for Allah (‘azza wa jall) and longing to spend time with Him has always been a hallmark of the pious slaves of Allah (‘azza wa jall).

“No time for prayer has ever arrived except that I have already made preparations for it. And never has it arrived except that I am eagerly looking forward to it.” – ‘Adī b. Ḥātim (raḥimahullāh)

Pray in the Congregation

Strive to pray in the congregation as much as possible. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times superior to the prayer offered by the person alone” (Bukhārī).

It is however, more virtuous for a woman to pray at home than in the masjid.

In another ḥadīth, he ﷺ warned, “Whoever hears the adhān and does not come (to the masjid), his ṣalāh is not valid, unless if he has an excuse” (Abū Dāwūd). When ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās (radīy Allāhū ‘anhumā) was asked about what constitutes an excuse he replied, “Illness or fear.”

Always aim to arrive early, before the opening takbīr (takbīrat al-taḥrīm). The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever performs ṣalāh for Allah for forty days in the congregation, catching the first takbīr, he will be recorded as being free from two things: free from the Hell-fire and free of hypocrisy” (Tirmidhī). Moreover, he ﷺ also said, “A Muslim is not regular in attending the masājīd for ṣalāh and dhikr, except that Allah welcomes him happily just as people welcome their loved ones happily upon their return from a journey” (Ibn Mājah).

Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyib (raḥimahullāh) said, “For thirty years, the mu‘addhin has not made the call to prayer except that I have already been in the masjid.”

Muḥammad b. Samā‘ah al-Tamīmī (raḥimahullāh) said, “I did not miss the first takbīr for forty years except for once: the day when my mother passed away.”

“When you see a man who is careless in regards to the first takbīr, then wash your hands of him.” – Ibrāhīm al-Taymī (raḥimahullāh)

“Coming to ṣalāh before the iqāmah is an indication of you honouring ṣalāh.” – Sufyān b. ‘Uyaynah (raḥimahullāh)

10 STEPS TO DEVELOP KHUSHU' BEFORE SALAH

9: Be Punctual With Your Sunnah Prayers

Being punctual with the sunnah and nafl prayers will help you to attain khushū' in ṣalāh.

Performing the sunnah prayers before the farḍ prayers is akin to stretching before exercising. Starting with the sunnah prayers awakens your heart and prepares you for attaining greater khushū' in the farḍ prayers. Performing sunnah prayers after the farḍ prayers compensates for deficiencies in the farḍ prayers.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The first action which a servant of Allah will be held accountable for on the Day of Judgement will be his ṣalāh. If it is complete, he will triumph and succeed; if it is defective, he will fail and be doomed. If there is something defective in his farḍ prayers, then the Almighty Lord will say, ‘See if my servant has any voluntary prayers that can make up for the shortcomings in his farḍ prayers.’ Then, the rest of his deeds will be [judged] like that” (Tirmidhī).

Don't Miss the 12

Try your best to perform the 12 rak'ahs known as the rawātib or sunnah mu'akkadah prayers on time. These were prescribed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: two before Fajr, four before Ḍuhr, two after Ḍuhr, two after Maghrib and two after 'Ishā'. Whenever you feel lazy, remind yourself of the reward: “There is no Muslim slave who prays twelve rak'ahs for Allah every day voluntarily, apart from the farḍ prayers, except that Allah will build a mansion for him in Paradise” (Muslim).

He ﷺ also said, “Whoever maintains four rak'ahs before Ḍuhr and four after it, Allah will make the Hell-fire unlawful for him” (Abū Dāwūd). Furthermore, he ﷺ stated, “The two [sunnah] rak'ahs of Fajr are better than the world and everything it contains” (Muslim).

Moreover, the Prophet ﷺ made a special du'ā' for the one who prays the sunnah prayers before 'Aṣr: “May Allah have mercy upon a person who prays four rak'ahs before 'Aṣr” (Aḥmad).

One way to ensure you always arrive before the first takbīr of the congregational prayers is to always come for the sunnah prayers before ṣalāh. If you are delayed for any reason, you will still likely be on time for the first takbīr.

Similarly, if you seek always to pray your sunnah prayers, then aim to arrive early enough to perform nafl prayers. Accordingly, if for any reason you are delayed on the way, you're still likely to arrive on time to complete the sunnah prayers inshā'Allah.

“Whoever takes adab (the best manner of doing things) lightly will be punished by being deprived of the sunnah. Whoever takes the sunnah lightly will be punished by being deprived of the farā'id (obligations). And whoever takes the farā'id (obligations) lightly will be deprived of becoming acquainted with Allah.” – 'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak (rahimahullāh)

10 STEPS TO DEVELOP KHUSHU' BEFORE SALAH

10: Eliminate Distractions

Before praying ṣalāh, always try your best to remove distractions. Anything which may distract or worry you in ṣalāh will reduce the khushū' in your ṣalāh.

Ibn Kathīr (raḥimahullāh) says, “Khushū' in ṣalāh is only attained by the one who has emptied his heart totally for it, who occupies himself fully for it and does not pay attention to anything else besides it, and who prioritises it over everything else. At that point it becomes a source of comfort and intense joy.”

So if you are hungry, eat before you pray. Similarly, if you need to relieve yourself, do it before you pray. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Ṣalāh should not be performed when the food has been presented, nor when one is fighting the urge to go to the bathroom” (Abū Dāwūd). He ﷺ also said, “If dinner is served, and the iqāmah for ṣalāh has been given, then start with the dinner” (Bukhārī).

Imām al-Munāwī (raḥimahullāh) explains that the above narrations indicate that it is more important and virtuous to pray with the presence of the heart, than to pray at the start of the prayer time.

“An insightful person attends to what he needs to before ṣalāh so that he may enter the ṣalāh with his heart unburdened.” – Abū al-Dardā' (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu)

How to eliminate distractions

- ✚ Find a quiet place to pray. Avoid praying where others are talking or where there is a noise that is likely to distract you.
- ✚ Mentally go 'offline' for your ṣalāh by ensuring your phone is on 'silent mode'. Avoid checking your phone between the farḍ and sunnah prayers.
- ✚ If you have a small child, where possible, ask someone to look after them whilst you pray.
- ✚ Avoid performing your ṣalāh whilst you have urgent matters waiting. For instance, if you are cooking, then turn off the cooker for the duration of the ṣalāh to stop you worrying about it during your ṣalāh.
- ✚ Pray where you are comfortable. Avoid anywhere where it is too cold or too hot, as this might hinder your ability to focus.
- ✚ Pray in clothes which are not distracting. The Prophet ﷺ once returned a garment which had patterns on it to one of his Companions (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhum) because it distracted him during his ṣalāh (Bukhārī).
- ✚ Ensure you are not surrounded by distracting objects. The Prophet ﷺ told his wife 'Ā'ishah (raḍiy Allāhu 'anha) to remove a curtain because its pictures had diverted his attention in ṣalāh (Bukhārī).
- ✚ Pray towards a sutrah (a barrier or a wall in front of you). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When one of you prays towards a sutrah he should stay close to it and not let Shayṭān interrupt his ṣalāh” (Abū Dāwūd). The wisdom behind using a sutrah is to prevent your eyes glancing further than the sutrah and, therefore, beyond your place of prayer. It also stops people from passing in front of you, and stops shayṭān from passing by and ruining your prayer.

Occasionally, during ṣalāh, we may find ourselves distracted due to thinking about petty matters. On such occasions, we should try to remember the greatness of the One we are conversing with and the majesty of the One looking at us. We should think about death and the hereafter, and rein in our thoughts to bring our minds back to ṣalāh.

Once a fire broke out in the house of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu), whilst he was prostrating. People around him began to say, “O son of the Messenger of Allah! Fire! Fire!” However, he did not raise his head until the fire was extinguished. When this was mentioned to him, he remarked, “The other Fire (i.e. Hell-fire) distracted me from it.”

Learn the fiqh of ṣalāh

Learn and regularly refresh your knowledge of the legal rulings of ṣalāh, so that you are not distracted by thoughts like, ‘Is my ṣalāh valid/should I be repeating the prayer, or is sajdah al-sahw sufficient?’ This will help you to pray ṣalāh more calmly and with greater khushū'.