

RE Knowledge Organiser: What does it mean to be Muslim?

KPI: Know and understand how beliefs influence individuals, communities and societies.

Islam – An introduction

The word *Islam* is an Arabic word related to *Salam* which means peace. Islam is the peace that comes from obeying the will of God. The word *Muslim* is also an Arabic word which means someone who obeys the will of God.

Allah means 'The God' and is singular, not plural. This reflects the Muslim belief that there is only One God. Allah is the name that Muslims use for God.

Muhammad is the name of the Arabic man who lived about 1,500 years ago) in Arabia and became the prophet of Islam. Many Muslims add the letters pbuh which stand for 'Peace and Blessings Upon Him' after his name.

Muhammad's (pbuh) messages were all written down and collected together. The book that they are written in is called the Holy Qur'an. It is written in Arabic, the language in which it was revealed, but it has been translated into many other languages. Muslims have five rules which are most important. These come from the Qur'an and the actions of Muhammad (pbuh). They are often called The Five Pillars of Islam:

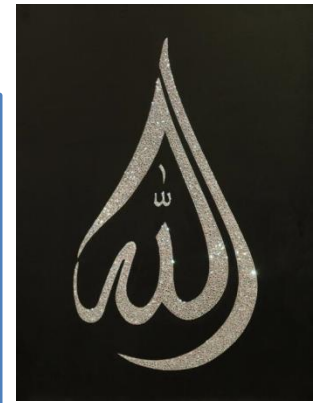
Muslims pray on their own and together. When they pray together they often go to the Mosque.

Islam is one of the biggest religions in the world today. There are Muslims in most countries and Britain is no exception. There are around 2 million British Muslims.

When Muslims meet, they greet each other by saying,

As-Salāmu `Alaykum

This is a traditional Muslim greeting, often translated as Peace be upon you.



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Muhammad – who was he?

Muhammad was born in Makkah in 571CE, his childhood was often hard, and he was orphaned at the age of six. As he grew up, he became known as Al-Amin – 'The Trustworthy' – and was called to become a prophet at 40 years old. Allah spoke to Muhammad through an Angel to reveal His Word.

Even when Muhammad was violently attacked by his opponents, he lived justly and peacefully. He treated his enemies with mercy and forbid his followers to attack first. Muhammad taught people how to behave, and what the consequences would be for disobedience. He taught that all will be judged on the Last Day .

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What is a Mosque?

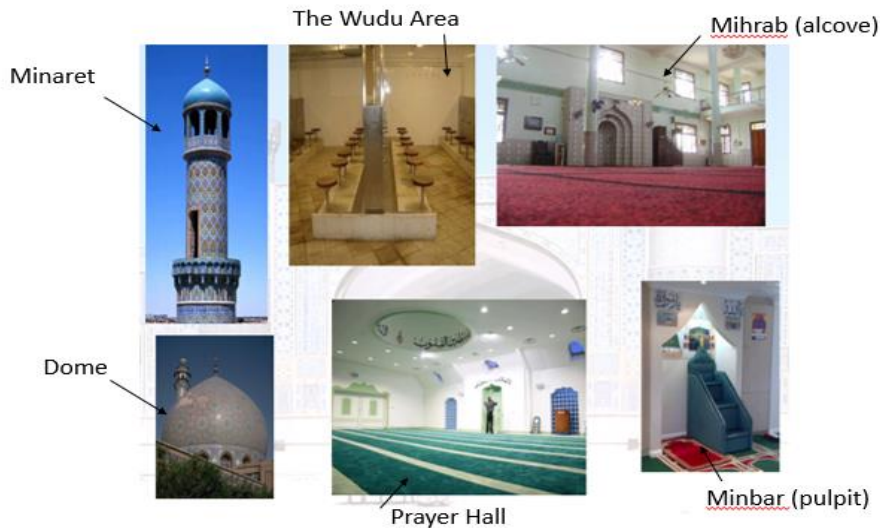
A Mosque is a Muslim Holy Place of Worship. There are many physical features that can help you recognise a Mosque. However, not ALL mosques have to have them and can be converted dwellings such as in Swindon.

Muslim prayer is called Salah and it is one of the Five Pillars of Islam – the five duties that all Muslims should perform.

Why might the Mosque be more than a place where worship happens?

- The Mosque has more than just a prayer hall; it has a library and school room so that it can be used to educate the young and older members of the community and a sense of 'learning' is a large part of the religion.
- The Mosque also has community space where the community of Muslims can gather and hold other functions this helps unite the community in other ways than worship
- The Mosque is seen as a focal point for the community; the Imam can act as both a spiritual leader and councillor in everyday life.

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The Dome - The Dome, which is positioned above the prayer hall, symbolises Heaven arching above the worshippers. But Mosques also have domes for very practical reasons: It helps the Imam's voice to resonate around the prayer hall, so everyone can hear him, it also helps people to identify the building as a mosque.

The Minaret - The tall tower attached to the mosque is called a minaret and it has two main uses: It helps people to find the mosque, since it is often the tallest structure in the town and it is used for the call to prayer. A man called a muezzin has the job of climbing to the top and singing the Adhan. This is the call to prayer, and it reminds everyone that it is time to come to the mosque.

Wash Room - Before Muslims pray, they must perform a special wash called wudhu (or wudu) in which they wash their hands, feet and face three times. This is done to symbolize purity and to highlight that prayer is important. There will separate wash rooms for men and women.

Prayer Hall - The main prayer hall is usually just a large empty hall with the dome above it. There are no chairs (apart from maybe a few for the disabled or elderly) because everyone sits on the carpet. During prayer Muslims will kneel and prostrate with their foreheads to the floor as a sign of obedience to God, so chairs would only get in the way. Men and women sit separately so that their minds are on their prayers and not on each other.

Mihrab - When Muslims pray they must face the direction of the Ka'ba, which is a cube-shaped holy building in the centre of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. This direction is called the qibla. The mihrab is an archway set into the wall at the front of the prayer hall, and if you are facing the mihrab, you know that you are facing the qibla.

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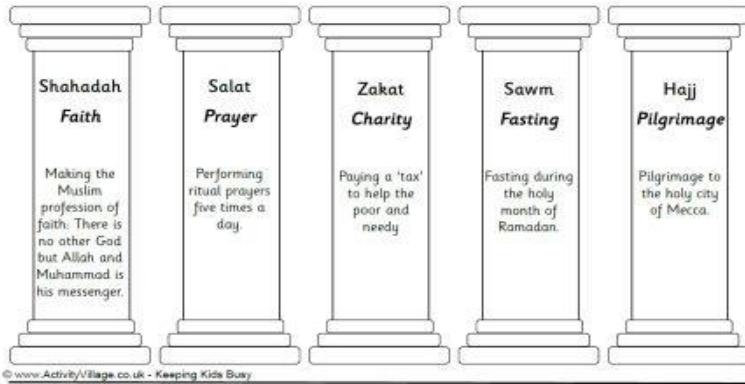
Know and understand religious sources of wisdom and authority.

The 5 Pillars

The Five Pillars of Islam

Activity
village

The five pillars of Islam are the five basic rules that Muslims must live by to live a good life according to Islam.



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Pillar 5 – Hajj

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam, where all Muslims are required to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once in their life time. They have to be fit and financially secure in order to go, if they can't someone may go on their behalf.

Irham – this is where the pilgrims wash and shave their heads and dress in white clothing. They do this to represent equality and purity

Ka'bah – the pilgrims must walk around the Ka'bah seven times which reminds them of when Muhammad (PBUH) stormed the Ka'bah when people were worshipping idols.

Safa Marwah – this is where the pilgrims walk between two hills 7 times to represent the story of Hagar and Ishmail searching for water in the desert

Arafat – this is where the pilgrims stand on a hill for the whole day praying and repenting; it is believed that this is where their sins can be forgiven

Stoning the Pillars – this is where the pilgrims throw stones at three pillars which represent the temptations of the Devil and they are not giving into these temptations.

Sacrifice – this is when at the end of Hajj, each pilgrim pays for a lamb to be slaughtered and it is given to the poor.

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Pillar 4 – Sawm (fasting)

Once a year every Muslim who is old enough should perform a month of daylight fasting. This is called Ramadan. If a Muslim is pregnant or of old age, they do not need to participate.

Why do they fast?

Fasting is meant to help teach Muslims self – discipline, self – restraint and generosity.

Fasting will also remind Muslims of the suffering of the poor who may not get to eat well all the time.

Ramadan also allows time for Muslims to reflect on the teachings of the Qur'an – often Muslims will attempt to read the whole Qur'an over the Ramadan period.

The celebration at the end of Ramadan thanks Allah for the help and strength that he gave them throughout Ramadan

Finally; the festival (Eid) is also a time for forgiveness and a time to give money to charity in order for the poor to be able to celebrate too.

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Why is following these 5 Pillars important?

Carrying out these duties provides the framework of a Muslim's life, and weaves their everyday activities and their beliefs into a single role of religious devotion.

No matter how sincerely a person may believe, Islam regards it as pointless to live life without putting that faith into action and practice.

Carrying out the Five Pillars demonstrates that the Muslim is putting their faith first, and not just trying to fit it in around their secular lives