

Islam Guidelines for RE

What are the 'big ideas' in Islam?

The word '**Islam**' means 'peace', 'harmony' and 'submission', and a Muslim's life is lived in accordance with these concepts, in submission to Allah (God). **Muslims believe** in the oneness of God, 'Tawhid', which is stated in the **shahadah**, both the Muslim statement of belief, and the call to pray. Muslims believe that the **Qu'ran** is the eternal word of God, the complete and final revelation of Allah to the last prophet, **Muhammad** (pbuh) on the **Night of Power**. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is considered by Muslims to be the best example of spiritual and moral conduct and is revered above all others. **Five Pillars** are central to the life of a Muslim, giving life shape and strength: to '**believe** every moment; **pray** five times a day; **give** when you do your accounts; **fast** for a month out of the year; and **travel** to Makkah once in a lifetime if you can.' Prayer (**salah**), performed at five daily prayer times mean that Muslims pray as a community, even if they are not physically together. **Mosque** simply means 'place of prostration', which is how Muslims express submission to Allah during prayer.





What do I need to know about Islam?

The word 'Islam' comes from the Arabic root, **SLM**, which means peace, purity, submission and obedience. It is therefore found in other key words in the religion: 'Muslim' – a follower of Islam – and 'sallam', peace, often used as a greeting.

Islam is a comprehensive way of life, and is based on the Oneness of Allah and the role and status of the Prophet Muhammad* (pbuh) as an example to humankind. [* After the name of the Prophet Muhammad, or any other prophet of Islam, Muslims say or write, 'Salla'llahu alaihi wa sallam' (peace and blessings of Allah upon him – often reduced to 'pbuh')]. It is not required that non-Muslims do this, but it is suggested that teachers, as part of learning about Islam in their classrooms, model this concept of respect to pupils.

The Islamic way of life encompasses all aspects of a person's daily existence, and is best described as a state of peace attained through willing obedience to Allah's divine guidance. Muslims strive to achieve this by following all the Qur'anic injunctions regarding behaviour and worship, for example the five daily times of salah (prayer), fasting during Ramadan, acts of charity and constant consciousness of their relationship with Allah. Life is shaped by the Five Pillars, which strengthen and support the Muslim community (Ummah).



An important part of Muslim community life for men and women in Europe is the Mosque. Friday is the day for congregational worship, but many Muslims attend the Mosque daily. However, 'mosque' simply means 'place of prostration', so in actual fact, Muslims *can* pray anywhere, as long as it is clean, which is why they might use a prayer mat. The act of praying, in complete submission to Allah, makes the whole world a mosque! Most Muslims will keep one room in their home especially clean for salah.

Whilst images of living beings, and especially any representations of Allah, the prophets or angels **are** forbidden, there are many other ways in which mosques & sacred texts are decorated, using pattern and Arabic calligraphy, often expressing truths about Allah. The concept of **tawhid** (the oneness of God) is often illustrated through elaborately intricate and interlaced patterns, and in mosque gardens.



What do Muslims believe?

**lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh,
muḥammadur-rasūlu-llāh**

There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

Key beliefs in Islam are expressed in the **shahadah**, the Muslim declaration of faith: 'There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. A person becomes a Muslim not by race, nationality or culture, but by professing belief in that statement and by reflecting it in the practice of the Islamic way of life. The **shahadah** is also contained within the call to prayer, the **adhan**, which first states that 'God is great' (in Arabic, 'Allahu Akbar') and then continues with the **shahadah**. The

Adhan is the first thing that is whispered into the ear of a newborn baby, and the last that a Muslim hopes to hear before they die.

Allah is the Arabic name for God. Muslims believe that God is One (tawhid), and has no equal; that his existence is revealed within nature, and through his prophets. Muslims believe that Allah sent many Messengers and Prophets to whom He revealed His divine guidance. These included Ibrahim – Abraham (peace be upon him), Musa – Moses (peace be upon him), Isa – Jesus (peace be upon him) and the last and greatest prophet Muhammad*, who was born in Makka, Arabia in 570 CE. They therefore affirm the writings of the Tawrah (Torah), the Zabur (Psalms of Dawud, David) and the Injil (Gospels of the prophet Isa, Jesus), but believe them to be corrupted versions of the original revelation.



Muhammad (pbuh) is **not** the founder of Islam, but is the last and greatest of all the Prophets, described in Islam as the 'seal of the prophets'. Muhammad is revered as the most perfect example of a man, on whom Muslims will model their own lives. Stories about him can be found in the Qur'an, and many other of his wise sayings are collected in texts known as **hadith**. It is important that stories about prophets in Islam, especially Muhammad, are handled appropriately: pupils should not be encouraged to act them out, as this would be considered disrespectful, but there are many other ways of working with Muslim stories, such as reflective storytelling using objects.

The Qur'an is the final revelation of Allah's guidance for mankind, and is a copy of a book that is kept in heaven. The Qur'an was revealed to

'Bismillaah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem'
In the name of God, the infinitely
Compassionate and Merciful.
Qur'an, opening surah



Muhammad* in a cave on Mount Hira by the angel Jibra'il – Gabriel – in 610CE, when Muhammad was 49 years old. This night is known as the 'Night of Power' (*Laylat al-Qadr*) and is one of the last 10 odd-numbered nights of Ramadan: it is believed that prayer on this night is worth 1000 months of worship. The revelations continued over the next 23 years of his life and were learned by heart and dictated to scribes. The revelations were also recited and proclaimed by him to his companions. The Qur'an gives detailed guidance on

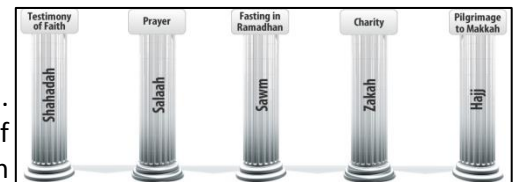
how humankind should behave, in terms of moral conduct and family relationships as well as the treatment of animals and the natural world. Whatever the language of the Muslim, the Qur'an is recited in the Arabic language of its revelation, in its purest form. Muslim children will often attend *madrassah* (mosque school) each day for up to 2 hours after school, where they will learn portions of the Qur'an and what it means. The Qur'an is divided into 114 *surahs* (chapters) and *ayahs* (verses). Arabic copies of the Qur'an are treated with the highest respect, because it comes from the highest authority, which is why it is kept high on a shelf, covered when not in use, and handled with clean hands. Whilst it *is* important that pupils get to see a 'real' Qur'an (especially if it can be read from by someone who is a Muslim), it is recommended that an English version of the Qur'an is used as the basis for learning about Islam in the classroom. It ensures that the contents are more accessible to pupils, and is less likely to cause any offence within the Muslim community. Suggestions can be found within the Resources section below.

To Him is due the origin of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He says to it 'Be', and it is.
Qur'an, surah 2:117



A window on.... the Five Pillars

What gives strength and shape to our lives? Family?... Friends?Faith?... For a Muslim, it is the five pillars of their faith: five big concepts that pupils should consider in



believe every moment; **pray** five times a day; **fast** for a month out of the year; **give** charity once a year when you do your accounts; **travel to Makkah** once in a lifetime if you can

their learning about and from Islam. The often-misunderstood word '*Jihad*' has two different meanings for a Muslim: the *greater* (internal) jihad, which is concerned with the struggle every Muslim faces to live out their faith to the best of their ability, and to build a good Muslim society. *Lesser jihad* is the struggle to defend Islam, using warfare only if nothing else has worked. Military jihad is permitted in certain circumstances, and as a last resort, but is not a true jihad if it forces

people to convert to Islam, conquers other nations to colonise them or for economic gain, to settle disputes or display a leader's might. The Prophet Muhammad said, on returning from a battle 'We return from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad.' The **Five Pillars** can, therefore, be seen as way of helping Muslims, through *greater jihad*, to get closer to Allah and become better Muslims. The five pillars are:

- 1. Shahadah:** see section above **What do Muslims believe?**
- 2. Salah (prayer):** at five different times during the day. Wherever possible, the set times for prayer (early morning, just before sunrise; midday; in the afternoon; in the evening just after sunset; during the night, but before midnight) are followed, as it joins Muslims with the worldwide Muslim community (ummah). However, at times when it's not possible, two or more of the set prayers may be joined together. Before praying, Muslims perform *wudu*, which is both a physical and spiritual act. There are set positions for prayer (rak'ah) which have symbolic meanings. You can find out more at: www.bbc.co.uk/religion/galleries/salah/
- 3. Sawm (fasting during Ramadan):** Muslims fast during daylight hours for the month of Ramadan, which marks the giving of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. The fast is not just a physical act, but deeply spiritual, and the discipline learned during the fast should help a Muslim to live a better life after the fast. During Ramadan, there is often an extra congregational prayer time at night, *taraweeh*, during which portions of the Qur'an are read, the aim being to have read it entirely during the month.
- 4. Zakat (giving / charity):** all Muslims should give 2.5% of their surplus savings annually, which is then shared amongst the poor and needy, and as well as an obligation, is considered an act of worship. The charity *Islamic Relief* has an annual income from Zakat of over £40million. Other charities are listed in Resources.
- 5. Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah):** Makkah (Mecca) is Islam's holiest site. It is the birthplace of the Prophet (pbuh), but also the site of the Ka'bah, the black stone which Muslims believe fell from heaven as a sign of the first covenant between God and humankind, and which Adam made into a shrine. On Hajj (in the 12th month of the Muslim calendar), pilgrims circle the Ka'bah anti-clockwise seven times, symbolising



the unity of the ummah, kissing it, if possible, or saluting it. Pilgrims all dress the same, in simple white clothes called *ihram*, expressing simplicity, unity and equality, regardless of economic status, race, culture or gender. During Hajj, pilgrims will also sip water from the sacred well of Zamzam (which saved Hagar (wife of Ibrahim) and Isma'il's life), walk between the two hills of Safa and Marwa, seven times, and throw stones at the 'devil' (see **Resources** for info.)



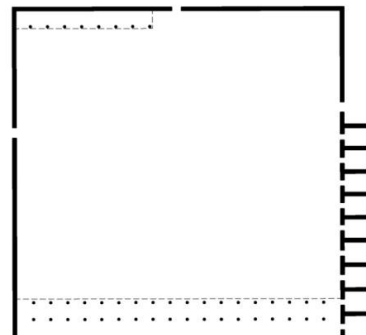
“The Two Ids”: *Id-ul-Fitr* marks the end of Ramadan and is a time for Muslims to ask for forgiveness, and to give thanks. Presents are given and new clothes bought. *Id-ul-Adha* commemorates the devotion of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) in sacrificing Isma'il.

What makes a mosque a mosque?

The home of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (*diagram, right*) is considered the first mosque. His house, in Medina in modern-day Saudi Arabia, was a typical 7th-century Arabian style house, with a large courtyard surrounded by long rooms supported by columns. This style of mosque came to be known as a hypostyle mosque, meaning “many columns.” Most mosques built in Arab lands adopted this style for centuries.

Find out more at:

www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-islam/beginners-guide-islamic/a/introduction-to-mosque-architecture



Although architectural style may be affected by regional and cultural traditions, most mosques will retain certain features, which include:

1. **An outer courtyard:** with running water, where wudu, ritual washing, will take place
2. **Mihrab:** a niche in one wall (the **qibla** wall), which indicates the exact direction of Mecca, the location of the ka'bah. Muslims pray facing in this direction.
3. **Minaret:** the tall tower, often domed, from which the



adhan (call to prayer) is sung. Whilst purely practical in aiding the broadcast of the adhan, it also serves as a powerful visual reminder of the local presence of Islam.

4. **Qubba:** most mosques will have at least one dome, symbolically representing the vault of heaven, which is sited into the qibla wall. This dome will usually be the most ornately decorated.

Useful web-based resources for teachers and classrooms:

- www.reonline.org.uk Great for background knowledge, with lots of links to classroom resources via a search tool. Use the 'Knowing' tab to find out what you want to know, or try here: www.reonline.org.uk/knowning/what-re/islam/
- REOnline also have some lesson ideas (search for '**RE Banquet**'), but ensure you match to the Diocesan Core Knowledge objectives.
- **My Life, My Religion:** There are clips of Muslim worship on the BBC 'My Life, My Religion' website. You can find individual clips, and complete programmes at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05pc1c9> Especially useful are: Islam – Prayer; Islam – the Mosque; Islam – Wudu. There are also clips you can view online from the BBC Pathways of Belief (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zyxn34j>) and Places for Worship DVD sets, many of which would support the Islam units.
- Interfaith Explorers webinars & resources for teachers / pupils esp. [webinars](#) are very useful for teacher knowledge and support.

Virtual mosque tours:

- Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking: www.surreyplacesofworship.org.uk/ and <http://www.shahjahanmosque.org.uk/>; BBC iWonder mosque tour: www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z297hv4#zwwk2p39; Bolton Mosque: www.thebcom.org/mosquetour/index.htm; London Central Mosque (KS3 material): www.truetube.co.uk/film/holy-cribs-mosque
- Great photos of [mosques from around the world](#) (Huffington Post is a great resource for pictures!)
- If you want to see / hear what goes on in a mosque as a live broadcast, Wembley Mosque has a facility that enables this: <http://www.virtualmosque.co.uk/>
- Some sacred stories from Islam feature on the British Library website: www.bl.uk/learning/cult/sacred/stories/
- Further suitable stories can also be found on the BBC Schools pages: www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship/collectiveworship_stories
- Pillars of Islam in song! www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7pBGqMvN0o
- Information about Hajj can be found at the BBC iWonder site: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zgymxnb>
- **Muslim charities:** <http://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/>; <https://muslimhands.org.uk/>; <http://www.nzf.org.uk/>
- Eid –ul-Fitr around the world: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-28544591>, also House of One, an interesting concept: www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-27872551
- **Books:** 'Ramadan Moon' by Na'ima B Robert & Shirin Adl (ISBN978-1-84780-206-4) is a lovely book, with beautifully-worded text expressing longings during Ramadan. Also useful is: My First Qur'an Storybook ISBN81-7898-554-3