



Mosque Etiquettes

Preparation

Dress modestly: Shoulders and knees should be covered. Loose clothing around the hips.

Have a neutral or absence sent: Similar to how a lawyer in a courtroom doesn't smell good or bad, that is entirely appropriate for a house of worship.

Avoid having any scent from your person that is very distinctive, be it good or bad. Men wear cologne in public places, whereas women do so in private spaces.

Avoid smoking or anything else that may make one's breath smell unpleasant before coming to not have that scent lingering. Things like garlic, onions, alcohol, etc. may be common culprits.

Pro Tip: A quick piece of gum may be good to keep on hand just in case.

Enroute

No smoking: before arriving on the premises, make sure to have put out any cigarettes. This includes e-cigarettes, medical marijuana, or any similar. If you forgot, remember that gum, mouth spray, or whatever.

Music off: Turning off the music in your vehicle before pulling into the mosque parking lot helps to observe an atmosphere that shows respect for the worshippers and their house of worship.

Arrival

Parking in non-designated spaces: some mosques have spaces designated not just for the handicapped, but also for Imams (religious leaders), staff, or some other purpose. Just like everywhere else, check to make sure the spot is undesignated. Usually, designated spots are closest to the entrance.

Park Swiftly: Parking in mosques is often an issue so making sure to park as swiftly as possible is appreciated. Changing drivers to park may be viewed as irresponsible, so perhaps parking in one spot, changing drivers, then parking elsewhere may be appreciated.

Keep it clean: as with other places, making sure to keep the parking lot clean even by not brushing out crumbs from the car onto the mosque grounds demonstrates shared respect.

Pictures or videos with permission: Some mosques have very beautiful architecture, so asking for permission before taking pictures or videos will be an appreciated gesture of respect.

Phones turned to silent or off: At any given time, worshippers may be present so to minimize distractions, having phones off or on silent will help maintain the spiritual atmosphere.

Enter through the proper door: some mosques have a single entrance, while others have one for men and another for women. Taking a glance may indicate if there is one or two. Usually, the main entrance, if there are two, is for men.

Pro Tip: If men and women worshippers are arriving at the same time, then ask or follow the appropriate sex to the proper entrance. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Greetings

Handshake: only offer a handshake to those of the same sex and gender as you, men to men, women to women. Across sexes, putting the hand on the chest, a single wave, a nod, any other greeting gesture, or combination is entirely appropriate. **Exception:** some may initiate the handshake across sexes, so reciprocate only with that specific individual.

Pro Tip: wait for the other person to initiate the physical greeting and mimic them.

Physical touch: Similar to handshakes, touching is limited to the same-sex and gender. No hugs, high-fives, taps, back pats, etc.

Inside

Remove your shoes: Mosques are usually carpeted because worshippers put their faces on the ground during ritual prayer. There are usual shoe shelves nearby, but sometimes they may be in a different room. So looking out for where the carpet is will give a definite off-limits zone for shoes. Take shoes off there and carry them to find the shoe shelves.

Eat and drink in designated areas: Since the prayer area is carpeted, and the worshippers place their faces on the ground, the cleanliness of the carpet is of paramount importance. Food and drink are designated to specific areas.

No intimate interactions: Between couples, it may be normal to give a goodbye kiss or some other type of intimate romantic gesture. This is not the norm in mosques, so avoiding such things as hugging, kissing, gestures or words that substitute for such would demonstrate the shared respect for the place.

Respectful Physical Demeanor: Physical gestures, fighting, or even rough play are not harmonious with the tranquil environment that houses of worship aim to embody.

Respectful Verbal Demeanor: This may be violated by arguing, raising voices, or some other expressions that one would not demonstrate before a judge in court.

Respectful Speech: In addition to how speech is expressed, the words and topics are also important. Use of profanity, explicit language, sexual references, discriminatory terms, or anything else that violates respect for the place and worshippers may be taken as disrespectful.

Keep it clean: As with all places, keep it clean by throwing trash in trash cans.

Mingle with same-sex and gender: mingling between sexes is not something many worshippers would be comfortable with, so men staying with men and women staying with women will help avoid any awkwardness.

Socialize in Designated areas: socializing in the entrance area, near or in the bathroom, or the prayer area may be considered insensitive. Look for other places like outside, the lobby, social areas, or some other place that is not a bottleneck point.

Prayer

Check your phone is off or on silent: During the prayer, worshippers are striving to be hyper-focused on their worship, so having a phone go off interferes with that concentration. If a call must be taken, then go to the designated socialization areas mentioned previously.

Do not stand or sit too close to worshippers: Sitting in behind or off to the side of your sex is respectful, men with men and women with women. Being too close to a worshipper is worse than reading with someone standing right over your shoulder. It is manageable, but it's distracting.

Be as silent as possible: Similar to other spaces like libraries, courtrooms, churches, and temples, mosques are places that thrive in an environment that is conducive to meditation and reflection. So silence is observed, even if there is only one worshipper reading, supplicating, or praying.

Do not cross in front of a worshipper: While a worshipper is praying individually or in the congregation, do not pass in front of them.

Pro Tip: since standing is part of ritual prayer, a way to tell if someone is just standing or praying is to see if they are staring at the ground in front of them. This is often accompanied by their hands on their chest, but not always.

Prayer lengths

Daily prayers: 5-10 minutes (Morning, Sunset, & Night prays are aloud. Noon & Afternoon are silent)

Friday prayer: 30-60 minutes (sermon is considered part of prayer)

Ramadan Night Prayer: 30-120 minutes

Bathroom

Do not enter with socks or bare feet: Look inside to see if slippers are present, if so, make sure the slippers remain inside the restroom.

***Pro tip:** It may be easiest to ask a community member about what footwear to use and where to use them. Different mosques have different setups.*

Do not speak to someone while using the restroom: Speaking while using the bathroom is something that is considered inappropriate. So refraining from speaking until both parties are finished with their business with the toilet is best.

Do not mention Religious beliefs: Mentioning God, angels, scripture, prophets, or the like may seem to be disrespectful to the object of mention.

Departure

Say Thank You: If there was someone helpful or coordinated anything, be sure to express gratitude for the help.

Understanding Hospitality: Oftentimes, some worshippers may offer for you to take home some food or something. They may constantly insist even five to ten times, so feel free to accept or reject. They are not intending on being pushy, it's their cultural way of offering hospitality.